

Raisins: A Sweet Treat

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Soft and chewy, raisins hide in cookies and other sweet desserts, waiting for someone to bite into them. Raisins are easy to find today, but thousands of years ago raisins were rare. In fact, people in ancient Rome could even pay their taxes in raisins.

Although they look quite different when they are growing, raisins are actually dried grapes. As they grow, raisin grapes

make sugar by using sunlight and water. They grow on vines and are not picked until they are very ripe. Grapes that are not yet ripe are not very sweet.

After grapes are harvested, they are dried. It takes about 4.5 pounds of grapes to make one pound of raisins. That's because they lose weight during the drying process. When the grape liquid evaporates, it leaves the sugar behind. That's why raisins taste sweeter than grapes.

Grapes were first grown in the Middle East at around 6000 BCE. Later, people noticed that if they dried ripe

fruit in the sun and the air, the fruit wouldn't rot. Since they could preserve fruits, people could eat them all year, not just at harvest time. Soon, grapes, dates, figs, and other fruits were being dried.

Spanish explorers brought grapes to the Americas in the 1700s. They found that California and Mexico had long growing seasons and lots of water, which grapes need to grow well. Soon, they were making both wine and raisins from their grapes.

Today, raisins are shipped from farms to bakeries, where they're baked into cookies, cakes, and muffins. Some go to stores, where people buy them to bake into cookies, breads, puddings, and muffins. They also add them to cereal. People also eat them as a snack all by themselves.

Raisins are a favorite food throughout the United States. In fact, each person eats an average of 1.3 pounds of raisins per year. How do you eat raisins?



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