



PACIFIC COAST
FARMERS' MARKET
ASSOCIATION

HERE'S A GRAPE IDEA – MAKE YOUR OWN RAISINS!



Grapes are abundant this month and the varieties at your farmers' market are endless! Fresh from the vine, these beauties make great raisins because they're plump and sweet, juicy and delicious.

Dehydrating grapes to make raisins can be a fun activity for you and your children, even though the results may take a day or two. Patience is a virtue with this project! The kids can learn a bit of science along with the project on how removing moisture from one fruit can create another equally tasty form of a snack.

Once the raisins are finished drying, they can make a healthy snack. Try the well-known "Ants on a Log" (celery and cream cheese topped with raisins), peanut butter toast sprinkled with raisins, oatmeal raisin cookies, or whatever you can dream up.

Select whatever color of grapes you like – the red and purple grapes will yield a darker raisin, the green grapes a lighter version. Homemade raisins can come out plumper and juicier with a flavor that's truer to that of the original fresh grape, only more intense. Grapes are 80% water so it takes time to turn them into raisins.

The traditional way to make raisins is for them to dry in the sun. The weather needs to be hot and dry. This takes 3 to 4 days, turning them frequently. But most people don't have the time to keep watch on them and watch for critters trying to nab them!

Using a Dehydrator:

1. Wash them and dry them thoroughly. Grapes from the farmers' market do not have any wax on them as grocery stores do, so you don't need to do much more than wash thoroughly in water. For best results use seedless grapes.
2. Some recipes call for grapes to be cut in half, but this is optional. You can poke holes in each grape to allow for moisture to escape.
3. Place on dehydrator trays.
4. Dry at 135°F for anywhere from 24 to 48 hours. Check them after the 18 hours and then check every 5 or 6 hours for dryness, tossing them a bit so they don't stick to the trays.
5. The time will depend on how large the grapes are, your dehydrator, the humidity in your home, etc. for doneness by removing a few from your trays, letting them cool off, and testing. You don't want them to come out too hard.
6. Store them in an airtight container. Place in a jar a little larger than necessary, and shake the jar once a day to loosen the grapes. This helps to ensure even humidity and allows you to catch any moisture before mold begins to form.
7. Two pounds of grapes yield about two 16-ounce glass jars of raisins.

Using Your Oven:

1. Wash and dry grapes.
2. Pierce grapes to allow moisture to escape when dehydrating.
3. Place on very lightly oil-sprayed baking sheets.
4. Dry in the oven at 145°F for 5 to 8 hours or more, depending on the size of the grapes. Any higher oven temperature will cook the raisins rather than drying them. Sometimes it takes as long as 12 hours - the exact time will vary quite a bit, depending on the size of your grapes, your oven, and your preferred degree of dryness.
5. To allow for air circulation, leave the oven door open at least 2 inches. Check every few hours for doneness. Don't over-dry.

6. When done to your desired firmness, remove from the oven, let cool thoroughly to avoid moisture buildup and mold. Store in an airtight container for up to a few weeks.

One of the benefits of eating dehydrated grapes is that they are an easy and quick way to pack a lot of nutrition in a snack or salad. When grapes are dried, the nutrients become more concentrated.

Start with the best grapes from the farmers' market, fresh from the farm to you.