

Sweet sultanas

DRIED FRUITS IN BAKED GOODS ARE POPULAR INGREDIENTS BUT WHERE DO THEY COME FROM AND WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE INDIVIDUAL TYPES?



+ Sultanas belong to the family of grapevines. They originated by the Caspian sea. There are three types of dried grapes – sultanas, currants and raisins. The differences between these “raisins” are outlined below in brief:

- +** Sultanas: no seeds, large grapes, light yellow color, larger than currants and smaller than “normal” raisins.
- +** Currants: no seeds, small grapes, purple-black color, named after the Greek city of Corinth.
- +** “Normal” raisins: with seeds, large grapes, often with stem.

Production: Grapes are cultivated at the grapevine of the sultana grape. The grapes are harvested when they are overripe. They are then either dried in the air or increasingly in special drying plants. Sultanas are mostly bleached, destemmed by machines and sulphurized after drying to increase their shelf life and to prevent discoloration during storage. Products treated this way have to be labeled accordingly. The sultanas are treated with vegetable oil to prevent them from sticking to each other.

Sultanas taste very sweet due to their high sugar content. Their taste resembles honey.

photo: sc.hu

Countries of origin

This table lists only the most important countries of origin and does not claim to be complete.

Europe	Turkey, Greece, Spain, Cyprus
Africa	South Africa
Asia	Iran, Afghanistan
America	USA, Mexico
Australia	Australia

Maximum shelf life

Temperature	Relative humidity	Maximum storage period
4 – 20°C	60 – 70%	12 months

Market development of sultanas

2004/2005		2005/2006	
Quantity (tons)	Av. price (\$/ton)	Quantity (tons)	Av. price (\$/ton)
199,814	1,046	163,608	1,191

Source: Sunrose

Quality

Sultanas should not show any quality deteriorations such as mould, rot, discoloration, infestation with threadworms or mites. The individual sultanas should not stick to each other. Furthermore, contamination by dirt should be as low as possible.

Application

Sultanas are consumed as they are or used as ingredients in trail mixes, baked goods, muesli and sweet desserts.

Market report: sultanas

Surprisingly to all market participants, the market is very lively. This is true for last year's harvest but also for new products. Former reports indicated that only very small quantities from 2005 are still in stock and that the prices have been stabilized at USD 1,350-1,400/ton. In general it was expected that the market would remain pretty calm in the next few months. However, in mid-May, the dollar did a large jump compared to the Turkey New Lira (TRY) and therefore affected the prices of all products, including sultanas. The prices dropped accordingly despite the fact that the raw material prices in TRY remained stable. As long as the dollar does not rise any more, a constant calm market is anticipated.

There are still about 15,000 t of sultanas from 2005 on the market. This should be a sufficient supply until the End of August when the new harvest comes in. The sultanas of 2005 are mainly Thompson Raisins, type 8 and 9 sultanas, which are highly suitable for export. The lighter colored sultanas type 10 and 11 are rarely available now. Small- and medium-sized grapes are also difficult to find nowadays. In terms of price, Thompson raisins have the same price as sultanas type 8, which is very unusual because in general raisins cost about USD 100 more. The reason for this price is that there are a lot of Thompson raisins left from 2005.

The new crop develops perfectly; weather and soil are just right for sultanas. The new harvest is expected to yield between 290,000 and 320,000 tons. Up to now no diseases have been found and therefore, the quality will be good also. The sizes of the individual grapes are relatively uniform from small, medium, and standard to jumbo. The most important periods in terms of quality are the dry months of August and September.

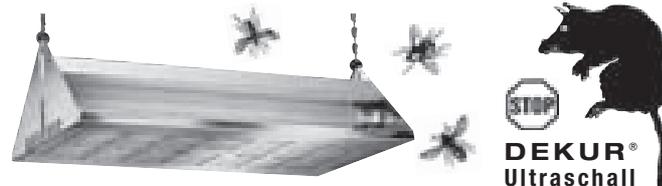
As usual, the first loads will be shipped at the beginning of September. It is expected that the first buyers will push the prices up because the producers at this time will not sell cheaply and would rather keep back their products. At the end of September, the holy month of Ramadan begins which is accompanied by an increased demand for sultanas type 10 and 11. At this time there are no producers of alcoholic products on the market because they mostly need grapes with seeds.

It is expected that the market will slow down after Christmas due to the large crop and if the dollar exchange rate remains stable compared to the high level of the TRY.

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