



# DRIED FRUIT TALKING POINTS

## 2. A slice of Dried Fruit History

- Athenians, including Plato, referred to themselves as “philosykos,” which translates to “friend of the fig.”
- Raisins are noted in ancient writings as far back as 1490 B.C.E., but it wasn’t until 1876 when Scottish immigrant William Thompson developed a seedless grape variety in the San Joaquin Valley, CA that the raisin industry was launched.
- After his failed gold mining venture, Frenchman Louis Pellier introduced Californians to dried plums at his Santa Clara Valley nursery in 1856.
- Early USDA explorer Bernard Johnson became the “father of the California date industry” when he established a research station near the desert town of Mecca in the late 1880s.
- There are about 250,000 date palm trees in the United States, most of which are on 5,000 acres in the Coachella Valley. In comparison, Iraq — which is only slightly larger in size than California — has nearly 22 million date palm trees.
- The fig is actually an inverted flower while the seeds are the drupes, or real fruit.
- The fiber and sorbitol found in dried plums can help retain moisture in leaner cuts of red meat and poultry.
- On average, Americans consume about two pounds of raisins per year, slightly ahead of fresh grape consumption.

## 3. How do Dried Fruits Grow?

- Fruits become dry when their moisture content drops below 20 percent. Dried fruits are the result of

either natural or mechanical processes.

- California’s grape growers happened upon raisins accidentally when an early heat wave dried the grapes on the vine. California plums, by comparison, are dehydrated by machines that lower the moisture content to about 15 percent.
- California has strict standards for dried fruit crops that involve sampling, washing, sizing and processing. Dried fruits are often treated with potassium sorbate to inhibit yeast and mold growth; sulfur dioxide is also added to preserve color. Before being sent to market, most dried fruits undergo a process — usually by boiling or steaming — to bring their moisture content up to about 30 percent. This added moisture usually makes the fruit more plump and tasty.

## 4. What Season do we pick Dried Fruits?

- Dried Fruits don’t have a season because they come from fresh fruit that is picked at the peak of its season, then dried and preserved so that the dried fruit stays fresh. That way when your favorite fruit is not in season you can get the dried version that has all the nutrition of your fresh fruit all year round.

## 5. Why Should We Eat Dried Fruits?

- Most dried fruits like dates, figs, plums and raisins are a source of dietary fiber. Fiber helps maintain steady blood sugar levels.
- Dried fruits are a source of the mineral potassium. The body needs potassium to maintain

- muscle contractions and a healthy nervous system.
- Figs and raisins contain iron, an essential mineral important for energy.
- Dried fruits are also high in calcium, Vitamin A, Vitamin C, B-complex vitamins and magnesium.

## 6. What do you do with Dried Fruit?

Fruits and vegetables come in a rainbow of colors. Eat a variety of colorful fruits and vegetables every day — red, yellow/orange, white, green and blue/purple. These may lower the risk of some cancers. Dried fruits can be found in each of the color groups.

Color Group	Health Benefits	Examples of Fruits and Vegetables
Red	Help maintain heart health, memory function and urinary tract health	Dried apples, beets, dried cranberries, red currants, pomegranates, rhubarb, red peppers
Yellow/Orange	Help maintain heart health, vision health and healthy immune system	Golden raisins, yellow figs, dried apricots, mandarins, sweet potatoes, yellow squash
White/Tan/Brown	Help maintain heart health and cholesterol levels that are already healthy	Dates, dried figs, bananas, Asian pears, leeks, onions, garlic, cauliflower, jicama, quince, mushrooms
Green	Help maintain vision health and strong bones and teeth	Dried kiwi, dried green apples, bok choy, mustard greens, turnips
Blue/Purple	Help maintain healthy aging, memory function and urinary tract health	Dried plums, raisins, Zante currants, dried blueberries, eggplants, purple cabbage

### **Produce Tips**

- Dried fruits are available all year.
- Look for dried fruits sold in bulk quantity.
- Buy dried fruits without added sugar. They are already sweet.
- Store dried fruits in airtight container to maintain freshness.
- Store in a cool, dry location like a cupboard or refrigerator.
- Freeze dried fruits before chopping. They will be less sticky and easier to chop.

### **Helping Your Child Eat Healthy**

- Introduce your child to a variety of dried fruits (e.g., dates, figs, plums, apples) and pick your family's favorites.
- Add raisins or dried cranberries to hot and cold cereals.
- Top low-fat yogurt with dried fruit and low-fat granola cereal for breakfast, an afternoon snack or dessert.
- Keep small boxes or bags of dried fruits with you for an on-the-go snack.
- Add chopped dates and figs to salads.

- Let your child make trail mix.
- Serve dried fruits for dessert.

### **Home Grown Facts**

- Ninety-five percent of the 30 million pounds of dates grown in the United States come from the Coachella and Salt River Valleys in Southern California.
- California's San Joaquin Valley grows 20 percent of the world's figs and 99 percent of the nation's crop.
- California is the world's leader of dried plums, producing about 65 percent of the world's supply and almost 99 percent of the nation's supply.
- Since 2001, California's dried plum crop has had an average annual value of about \$130 million.
- In the United States, raisins are produced almost exclusively in California's Central Valley (mostly in Fresno County) and represent nearly half of the world's supply.
- Ninety percent of raisin production comes from the Thompson seedless grape variety.