

*Vitis*

*Vitaceae*

*Vitis* is derived from Greek *voinos* or Hebrew *yain* or *wain* – or from Celtic *gwyd* (pronounced ‘vid’) meaning ‘the most exalted of trees’, and is a classical Latin name for ‘grape-vine’. The word ‘vine’ is said to be derived from a Latin word *viere* meaning ‘to twine or weave together’.

Apart from using the fruit to make wine (for which most of the grapes are destined) and brandy, they are also eaten fresh or dried. The grape is one of the three sweetest fruits known – the other two being the cherry (*Prunus avium*) and the fig (*Ficus*). In Florida in south-eastern North America the Seminole Indian tribe cooked fish with wild grapes and the Iroquois tribe used them to stuff duck.

Dried vine fruits (*raisins secs* - French) are **currants**, **raisins** (*passas* – Spanish) and **sultanas**. These are produced by exposing ripe grapes (4 lb. for every 1 lb. of dried fruit) to hot dry air (in the sun or artificially) and apart from some Vitamin C they retain all the goodness.

**Currants** are produced from different types of grape (the type determining their quality). Vines are grown for this purpose primarily in Greece and on a more limited scale in Australia, South Africa and California (United States).

**Raisins** are obtained from either seeded or seedless grapes. The stoned raisins come from large red wine grapes and table grapes grown in Australia, South Africa and Spain. The seedless raisins come from the Thompson sultana grape grown in Mexico, South Africa and the United States and these are green when they are harvested. (Afghanistan has also produced a seedless raisin from a red raisin grape.)

**Sultanas** are obtained from green grapes. These can be dried in the shade for lighter coloured fruit and in the sunshine for darker coloured fruit. They are produced in Afghanistan, Australia, Chile, China, France, Greece, Iran, Mexico, South Africa, Turkey and the United States.