

Green fruit spikes of peppercorns drying on mat in central Vietnam

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Green fruit spikes of peppercorns are piled on a mat in the sun to dry in central Vietnam. Black pepper, used in most of the cuisines of Europe and Asia, is made from the dried, unripe green berries of the *Piper nigrum* vine. The green berries are cooked briefly before drying to produce black peppercorns. A valuable spice crop already traded from India to the Mediterranean during the time of the Egyptian pharaohs, peppercorns are one of Vietnam's major cash crops. Currently Vietnam is the largest producer and exporter of pepper in the world.



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