

# thresh

THreSH/

*verb*

gerund or present participle: **threshing**

- 1.
2. separate grain from (a plant), typically with a flail or by the action of a revolving mechanism.
3. "machinery that can reap and thresh corn in the same process"

Threshing is the process of loosening the edible part of cereal grain (or other crop) from the scaly, inedible chaff that surrounds it. It is the step in grain preparation after harvesting and before winnowing, which separates the loosened chaff from the grain. Threshing does not remove the bran from the grain.

Threshing may be done by beating the grain using a flail on a threshing floor. Another traditional method of threshing is to make donkeys or oxen walk in circles on the grain on a hard surface. A modern version of this in some areas is to spread the grain on the surface of a country road so the grain may be threshed by the wheels of passing vehicles.

Hand threshing was laborious, with a bushel of wheat, taking about an hour. In the late 18th century, before threshing was mechanized, about one-quarter of agricultural labor was devoted to it.

Industrialization of threshing began in 1786 with the invention of the threshing machine by Scotsman Andrew Meikle. Today, in developed areas, it is now mostly done by machine, usually by a combine harvester, which harvests, threshes, and winnows the grain while it is still in the field.

**Combine:** machine that combines the processes of harvesting, threshing, and winnowing



# Winnow

win·now

<sup>1</sup>winō/

*verb*

gerund or present participle: winnowing

1. blow a current of air through (grain) in order to remove the chaff.

2. literary (of the wind) blow.

"the autumn wind winnowing its way through the grass"

Wind winnowing is an agricultural method developed by ancient cultures for separating grain from chaff. It is also used to remove weevils or other pests from stored grain. Threshing, the loosening of grain or seeds from the husks and straw, is the step in the chaff-removal process that comes before winnowing.

In its simplest form it involves throwing the mixture into the air so that the wind blows away the lighter chaff, while the heavier grains fall back down for recovery. Techniques included using a winnowing fan (a shaped basket shaken to raise the chaff) or using a tool (a winnowing fork or shovel) on a pile of harvested grain.

Winnowing can also describe the natural removal of fine material from a coarser sediment by wind or flowing water, analogous to the agricultural separation of wheat from chaff.

