

FOOD \$ENSE



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Cherries

Food \$ense Guide to Eating Fresh Fruits and Vegetables

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Utah Local Fresh Season: Mid-summer.

Availability: Cherries are available mid-June to mid-August with a peak season nationally in June.

Eating: There are two main types of cherries: sweet and sour. Sour cherries are lower in calories and higher in vitamin C and beta-carotene than sweet cherries.

Selecting: Buy cherries that have been kept cool and moist, as flavor and texture both suffer at warm temperatures. Good cherries should be large (one inch or more in diameter), glossy, plump, hard and dark-colored for their variety. Buy cherries with fresh green stems still attached. Avoid cherries that are small, bruised, have cuts or a dark surface, soft, wrinkled skin, leaking and sticky, or that have any visible signs of decay. Immature cherries will be smaller and less juicy while over-mature product will be soft, dull, and wrinkled.

Cleaning and Preparing: Most cherries bought at the market are eaten raw, alone or accompanied by other fruits. Simply wash the fruit and serve with the stems. Rinse fruit when ready to eat to prolong the freshness.

Storing: Loosely pack unwashed cherries in plastic bags or pour them into a shallow pan in a single layer and cover with plastic wrap to minimize bruising. Store cherries in the refrigerator; if in good condition cherries should last up to a week. Check the fruit occasionally and remove the

cherries that have gone bad. Wash the fruit before eating.

Cooking: Before cooking, pit cherries either by hand or with a pitter. Cherries can be eaten fresh, used in sauces, desserts, and in salads. Cherries can be made into jams and preserves, dried, and made into cherry juice.

Poaching is the most common form of preparation. Drop cherries into a small amount of simmering water, or a combination of water and cook for one to three minutes until soft. Poach using the formula of 1 cup liquid to 2 cups cherries.

Baking: cherries can be used in a variety of desserts and baked dishes.

Nutrition Highlights: Cherries are high in vitamin C, vitamin A, folate and iron. Cherries are also a good source of fiber.

Preserving:

Loose pack: You can freeze cherries by rinsing and draining thoroughly, spreading them out in a single layer on a cookie sheet and placing in the freezer overnight. Once the cherries are frozen, transfer them to a heavy plastic bag. The frozen fruit may be kept up to a year. Cherries can also be made into jams and jellies or dried.

Sugar pack: Mix 2/3 cup sugar per quart of sour cherries or 1/3 cup sugar per quart of sweet cherries.

Syrup pack: A light syrup of 4 cups water to 1 cup sugar, is recommended for sweet cherries. A medium to heavy syrup is recommended for sour cherries. Use 4 cups water and 2 cups sugar for medium, or 4 cups water and 4 cups sugar for a heavy syrup. Allow 1/2 to 2/3 cup of syrup for each pint of fruit.

Cherries can also be dried, canned or preserved into jams and jellies.

References:

1. www.fruitsandveggiesmatter.gov/month/spinach
2. www.produceoasis.com
3. www.utahsown.com
4. <http://extension.usu.edu/files/publications/cherry.pdf>

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Fresh Northwest Cherry Salsa

Makes 4 servings

Source: Produce for Better Health

- 2 cups pitted fresh or frozen sweet cherries
- 1/3 cup fresh basil, chopped
- 1/3 cup green peppers, finely chopped
- 2 tsp lemon juice
- 1/2 tsp sauce
- 1/2 tsp lemon peel
- 1/4 tsp salt
- Dash of bottled hot pepper sauce like Tabasco sauce.

Chop cherries in food processor or manually. Combine all ingredients, mixing well. Refrigerate at least 1 hour. Serve with tortilla chips. Makes a tasty garnish when served over meat.

Cherry Sauce

- 1 lb cherries
- 1/4 cup white wine vinegar
- 1/8 cup sugar

Split and pit cherries. In a blender, add cherries, vinegar, and sugar puree until smooth. Serve as a topping on pancakes, waffles, fresh bread, or in yogurt. This sauce make a great garnish served over meat.

Cherry Salad with Melon and Mint

- 1/4 honeydew melon, 1/2 inch dice
- 1 cantaloupe, 1/2 inch dice
- 1/4 cup fresh mint, minced
- 2 tablespoons light honey
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 2 tablespoons lime juice
- 1 1/2 cups pitted fresh cherries

In mixing bowl, add cantaloupe, honeydew, and mint. Mix gently. In small mixing bowl combine honey, lemon and lime juice stirring until well incorporated. Pour mixture over the melons and mix. Add the cherries and mix until lightly coated. Garnish with mint sprigs and serve.