



CHERRIES

Description

Cherry fruits are round with a depression at the stem. They are a fourth to an inch in diameter and have a smooth, thin skin that adheres to the fleshy pulp. The color of the skin, as well as the pulp, can range from yellow to red to near black, depending on the variety. Each fruit has a hard seed at its center.

Varieties

Cherries are categorized as “sweet” or “sour” according to their flavor. Bing and Lambert are popular dark-red, sweet cherries. Rainiere and Royal Ann are sweet varieties that are golden with a slight touch of red. Sour cherries are smaller, softer, and more globular, and the best-selling varieties are Early Richmond, Montmorency and Morello.

Uses

Sweet cherries are usually eaten fresh. They can be used to top ice cream, yogurt, or pancakes and waffles or they can be tossed into a fruit salad. Pitted sour cherries are used as pie filling or made into delicious compotes and jams. Candied cherries are used in baked items such as fruit cake and black forest cake. Dried cherries are also used for snacks or added to baked goods or desserts.

Recipe

Sour Cherry Pie

Mix

1/8 tsp. salt

1 c. sugar

3 c. drained, pitted fresh sour cherries

1/2 c. cherry juice

1/4 tsp. almond extract (or 1 tsp. grated orange peel).

Let stand 15 minutes. Pour into a 9 inch pie shell. Dot with 1 Tbsp. butter. Add top crust (or lattice crust, or crumb topping, or no crust at all). Bake in 425 degree oven for approximately 50 minutes.

Nutrient Content

Sour cherries are higher in vitamin C and vitamin A (carotene) than the sweet varieties. They also contain terpenes, phytochemicals that may help prevent cancer.

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Origin

Cherries were first cultivated in the Turkish town of Cezarus. Greek philosopher, Theophrastus, mentioned cherries as far back as 400 B.C. Currently the United States produces about 90,000 tons of cherries annually. Washington, Oregon, Idaho and Utah produce 70 percent of the nation’s crop. Worldwide, Europe is the leading producer. Cherries are related to other deciduous flowering fruit trees such as the peach. Until recently, cherry trees were difficult to grow in a home garden because of their large spread and height, cherry trees can reach 40 feet in height. Newly developed hybrids now reach no more than 6 to 8 feet in height. Some varieties are grown purely for their ornamental value. In spring they provide a spectacular display of white or pink blossoms.

Availability

Domestically grown cherries are available only from late May through early August. After August, cherries that appear in the market often have been kept in cold storage. Small quantities are imported from Chile and New Zealand during off-season. When selecting cherries, choose those that are firm, bright and shiny. Soft or shriveled fruits with darkened stems are a sign of old age or poor storage conditions. After purchase, cherries should be covered and refrigerated if not used immediately, because they tend to absorb odors. Fresh cherries can be stored in the refrigerator for up to 1 week or frozen for up to 1 year.