

Cherries



Lapin - Sweet

Did You Know

- Cherries are a type of stone fruit, along with peaches, apricots, plums, and nectarines. Stone fruits each contain one seed as hard as a stone. This is called a pit.
- Cherries come in different sizes and colors like yellow, pink, red, or brown. What color are the cherries you've seen?



Rainier - Sweet



Montmorency - Tart

- There are two main types found in grocery stores, "sweet" and "tart." Sweet cherries, as the name suggests, are sweeter than tart cherries, and are also larger. They are typically eaten fresh. Lapins, Sweetheart, Rainier, Royal Anne, Stella, Lambert, and Skeena are a few of the sweet cherry varieties grown in Montana. Tart cherries are sour and can also be called "pie" cherries. They are smaller and are typically used in baked goods. Tart cherry varieties grown in Montana include Evan's Bali, Montmorency, and Sweet Cherry Pie.
- Most of the sweet cherries grown in Montana are grown on the east side of Flathead Lake in western Montana, where it's warmer. "Flathead Cherries" are not a variety of cherry, but the name refers to sweet cherries grown in that region. Have you ever been to Flathead or seen a cherry stand?
- Cherry seeds, leaves, and stems can be poisonous, which means that they can make us feel sick when we eat them.



- Chokecherries are a special type of cherry native to Montana and many parts of the United States and Canada, which means that they have grown on the land for a very long time without the help of farmers and gardeners. Native Americans have traditionally eaten the fruit and used other parts of the plant for medicinal uses. Something is medicinal if it keeps us healthy or helps us feel better when we are sick. Chokecherries can be stored to be eaten later, such as during the winter. Chokecherries are also used to make jelly, syrups, and sauces.



Chokecherries

Gardening

Like apples, domesticated cherries will not grow "true to type" if grown by seed. If you plant your favorite sweet cherry pit, the cherries on the tree will not be the same variety as the cherry you ate, and likely will not taste very good. Nurseries "graft" new trees to grow fruit of a desired variety by attaching a branch of the desired variety to a rootstock to produce a new tree. Sweet cherry varieties are typically not hardy enough for most of Montana, therefore are mostly limited to the Flathead Lake region. Due to fruit flies and other pests, sweet cherry trees may need significant management. Contact your local Extension office regarding regulations and recommendations prior to planting sweet cherries.

Certain varieties of tart cherry trees can be grown in zones three and above, making them suitable for growing in most of Montana. Plant trees in a sunny area. Avoid planting in depressions or hollows where cold air can settle. Fruit trees need to be pruned in the spring. After planting, cherry trees can bear fruit

within 2-3 years. Sweet and tart cherries are harvested in mid-July to mid-August, depending on the variety and weather.

Chokecherries can be grown by a variety of methods including by seed, rhizome cuttings, and grafting. Dormant plants should be planted in early spring or late fall at least six feet apart. Proper pruning is important to promote branching and fruit production. Chokecherry bushes and other bush cherries should produce fruit 2-4 years after planting. Mature bushes produce about 30 pounds of fruit each year.

For more information about growing and caring for cherry bushes and trees, visit www.msuetension.org for MontGuides and resources or contact your Extension office.

Selection

Cherries do not ripen after picking, so they are harvested when ripe. Choose ripe cherries that are firm, glossy, and vibrantly colored. Avoid soft, bruised, or wrinkled cherries. Wash cherries prior to eating or using in a recipe.

Storage

While cherries can be stored at room temperature, storing in the refrigerator in a perforated or open plastic bag will extend their shelf life. Cherries absorb surrounding odors, so store cherries away from strong-smelling foods. Cherries can be frozen or dried for enjoying later. Frozen cherries can be cooked or used in baked goods. Keep dried cherries in an airtight container in a cool, dry place for up to one year. Pit cherries prior to freezing, drying, or cooking.

Cooking

Pit. Cut the cherry in half and scoop out pit with finger or spoon and discard the pit. A cherry pitter is a kitchen gadget that will make the process easier.

Fresh. Rinse, dry, and remove the pits to enjoy cherries as is, or slice in halves or quarters to serve in a fruit or green salad, salsa, yogurt, or granola. Mix into a smoothie for an added sweet and sour flavor and red color.

Frozen. Arrange a single layer of cleaned and pitted cherries on a tray and put into the freezer. Once frozen, store in an air tight container or freezer bag. Enjoy this juicy, cool treat on a warm day, or add to smoothies and baked goods.

Baked. Add pitted cherries to pies, muffins, or breads. Roast a single layer of pitted cherries sprinkled with sugar to make baked cherry topping or combine with poultry, game, or pork for a sweet and tart addition.

Dried. Place whole pitted or halved cherries on a tray and dehydrate at 125-135°F for approximately 12-24 hours.

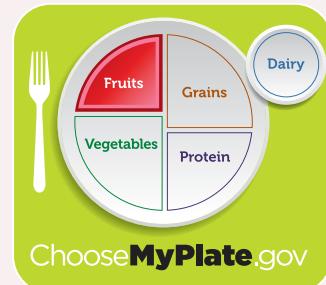
Season. Enhance the flavor of cherries with cinnamon, black pepper, vanilla, sage, basil, mint, or thyme.

Preserve. For information on preserving sweet cherries, tart cherries, or chokecherries as a jelly or syrup, look for Extension MontGuides on: Making Jams, Jellies, and Syrups including with wild Montana berries and fruit. Visit <https://nutrition.msuetension.org/> and click on the food preservation link or contact your Extension Office.

Nutrition Information

All cherry varieties are packed with flavor and nutrients. One cup of sweet cherries, tart cherries, or chokecherries provides a good source of vitamin C. Unlike many animals, human bodies do not produce this important vitamin.

Vitamin C helps build a strong immune system for fighting off disease and infection. It also helps the body absorb iron from plant-based sources. It is one more reason to eat your cherries! Tart cherries are also loaded with vitamin A, which is important for vision and helps with many other functions in the body.



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Activities

Compare and Contrast

Source: Christine Lux, Ed.D. Curriculum & Teaching and Early Childhood Education

Montana Early Learning Standards

- Physical Science
 - 4.17f Compare, contrast, and describe objects based upon their characteristics.
- Reasoning and Representational Thought
 - 4.5h Notice and describe how items are the same or different.
- Data Analysis
 - 4.12d Convey the concepts and use correct terms associated with classification and comparison.

Description:

Children will compare and contrast different stone fruits (cherries, peaches, apricots, plums, and nectarines) by examining sight, touch, taste, and smell

Supplies

3 - 6 of each stone fruit.

Directions

Gather children at meeting or small table. Allow children to feel and smell each fruit. Discuss the similarities and differences of each type of fruit (i.e. size, shape, color of skin, color of flesh, taste). Ask open ended questions such as Which fruit is the biggest? Which fruit is the smallest? Which fruit do you think tastes sweet? Which tastes tart or sour? Record children's ideas on chart paper.

Extend the Fun

Complete the same activity, this time examining the inside of each fruit and each pit. Wash each pit and use magnifiers to notice similarities and differences. Find other classroom objects that are the same size as stone fruit pits (cherry, peach, apricot, plum, nectarine).

Recipes

Cherry and Yogurt Parfait

Developed by: What's Cooking USDA Mixing Bowl, USDA

Servings

6

Ingredients

- 3/4 cup Granola, *whole grain rich*
- 3 cups Fresh cherries, *pitted and whole, sliced, or chopped*
- 3 cups Plain yogurt, *low-fat*
- 1/2 tsp Vanilla extract
- 1 Tbsp Honey

Preparation

- Set out desired number of cups (about 9 oz each) on work space.
- Place 1/2 cup cherries in each cup.
- Combine yogurt, vanilla, and honey in a large bowl. Stir well.
- Portion 1/2 cup (about 4 oz) yogurt mixture on top of cherries.
- Sprinkle granola on top of yogurt, portioned evenly between desired number of cups/servings.
- Serve immediately.



Red, White, and Blue Salad

Source: Northwest Cherry Growers

Servings

6

Ingredients

1 1/2 cups Fresh sweet cherries, pitted
1 1/2 cups Rainier cherries, pitted
1 1/2 cups White peach, large, pitted, and cubed
1 1/2 cups Fresh blueberries

Minted Honey Lemon Dressing

3 Tbsp Fresh lemon juice
1 1/2 Tbsp Honey
1 1/2 Tbsp Olive oil
1 Tbsp Fresh mint, chopped
1/4 tsp Salt

Preparation

1. Toss cherries, peaches, and blueberries in a bowl.
2. In a separate bowl, combine lemon dressing ingredients (lemon, honey, olive oil, mint, salt) and whisk well.
3. Drizzle dressing over fruit and toss gently.
4. Serve Immediately.

Dig Deeper

For sources and photo credits along with more recipes, lessons, quick activities, resources, and guides, visit: mtharvestofthemonth.org.



Book Nook

Sakura's Cherry Blossoms, by Robert Paul Weston



Under the Cherry Blossom Tree, by Allen Say

Apples, Cherries, Red Raspberries: What is in the Fruits Group?, By Brian P. Cleary

Apples to Oregon, by Deborah Hopkinson

Pie in the Sky, by Lois Ehlert

4 Montana Harvest of the Month: **Cherries**



The Montana Harvest of the Month program showcases Montana grown foods in Montana communities. This program is a collaboration between Montana Farm to School, Office of Public Instruction, Montana Team Nutrition Program, National Center for Appropriate Technology, Montana State University Extension, Gallatin Valley Farm to School, FoodCorps Montana, and Montana Department of Agriculture. More information and resources are available at: mtharvestofthemonth.org.

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