Selecting, Storing, and Serving Ohio Cherries

The Ohio cherry season begins in June and runs into July. Cherries can be divided into two groups—sour/tart and sweet. Each can be prepared in a variety of delicious ways, not only as a dessert or snack, but as an ingredient in a main dish or main dish accompaniment.

Selection
- Fresh sweet cherries should be firm, plump, bright, and glossy, with a full red or purple color and sweet taste. Degree of darkness depends on the variety.
- Sour cherries are smaller than sweet cherries and should be firm, bright, and uniformly red.
- Avoid purchasing over-mature cherries that are soft, dull, seeping, or shriveled.
- Tart cherries are widely planted in Ohio, and more than 90 percent are the “Montgomery” cultivar.
- Contact your local OSU Extension office for variety recommendations.

Storage
- Cherries are highly perishable and should be refrigerated as soon as possible. Tart cherries are more perishable than sweet cherries.
- Sort cherries carefully and place them loosely in a shallow container so that air can circulate. The weight of the cherries on top should not crush those on the bottom.
- Wash cherries just before using by rinsing gently in cool water.
- For highest quality, fresh cherries should be stored only 1 or 2 days.

Nutrition
- Cherries contain vitamins A and C, and potassium, manganese, and copper. Consumption of tart cherries has been linked to lower rates of diabetes and relief from arthritis and insomnia.

Yield
Due to variables, such as moisture content, size, and variety, it is impossible to recommend specific quantities to buy. The following recommendations are approximations.
- 1 pound fresh cherries = approximately 2 cups pitted
- sweet 12 pounds / sour 15 pounds = approximately 1 peck (8 quarts)

Serving Ideas
- Choose sweet cherries as a garnish for meat dishes.
- Cherries can be made into a syrup for topping pancakes, waffles, or French toast.
- Use your blender to make cherry “drinks” such as smoothies or coolers. Either by themselves or
blended with other juices, cherries make a delicious drink.

- Bake sweet cherries into cakes, cookies, and muffins.
- Make cherry ice cream.
- Dip one-half of each cherry with stem into melted chocolate and chill for a special cherry candy, garnish, or dessert.
- Cherries Jubilee is a classic dessert.
- Tart cherries are softer than sweet cherries but hold up well during baking. Choose tart cherries for your favorite cobbler, pie, or crisp.
- Make cherry wine or cherry vinaigrette.
- Enjoy a cherry sauce as a glaze over ham.
- Add dried cherries to oatmeal or yogurt.

Cherry Chicken Salad

2 cups pitted fresh sweet cherries
1 can (11-ounce) mandarin orange segments, drained
1½ cups diced cooked chicken or turkey
½ cup chopped celery
½ cup toasted slivered almonds
Creamy Ginger Dressing

Lettuce

Combine all ingredients except lettuce; toss gently until well mixed. Serve on individual lettuce-lined salad plates.

Makes 4 servings.

Creamy Ginger Dressing

½ cup reduced-calorie mayonnaise
1 tablespoon lemon juice
1 teaspoon soy sauce
¼ teaspoon grated fresh ginger

Combine ingredients. Refrigerate until ready to mix with salad.

Makes about ½ cup.

For more information on preserving cherries contact your local OSU Extension office for the following publications:

- Growing and Using Fruit at Home, Bulletin 591
- Basics for Canning Fruit, HYG-5343-08
- Freezing Fruits, HYG-5349-09
- Drying Fruits and Vegetables, HYG-5347-09
- Preserving Pie Fillings, HYG-5355-08
- Safe Handling of Fruits and Vegetables, HYG-5353-09
- Jams, Jellies, and Other Fruit Spreads, HYG-5350-09

Another source for information on preserving cherries:


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