Using, Storing and Preserving Cherries

Michigan-grown cherries are available between July and August.

Recommended varieties
Most cherry varieties are excellent for canning, freezing or making jam or jelly. Montmorency and North Star are tart cherry varieties, and Emperor Francis, Gold, Napoleon, Ulster are sweet cherry varieties.

Storage and food safety
- Purchase fruit that is not bruised or damaged.
- Wash hands before and after handling fresh fruit and vegetables.
- Wash fruit thoroughly under cool running water. Do not use soap.
- Store fruit in the refrigerator at or below 41 °F.
- Keep fruit away from raw meats and meat juice to prevent cross contamination.
- For best quality and nutritive value, preserve only what your family can consume in 12 months.

Yield

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pint</th>
<th>3/4 pound or 2 cups</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quart</td>
<td>1 1/2 pounds or 4 cups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lug</td>
<td>25 pounds or 8 to 12 quarts of canned cherries</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 pound (unpitted) cherries</td>
<td>1 3/4 cups pitted</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

How to preserve

Freezing
Freeze pitted or unpitted cherries. If cherries are pitted, add 1/2 teaspoon of ascorbic acid to each quart of syrup used to prevent discoloration.

Tart cherries:
Select bright red, tree-ripened fruit. Stem, sort and wash thoroughly. Drain and pit.
Pack using one of the following methods:
- **Syrup pack method:** This is the best method to use for serving cherries uncooked. Pack cherries into containers and cover with cold medium or heavy syrup depending on the tartness of the cherries. (See directions on how to prepare the syrup under "Recipes.") Leave 1/2-inch headspace. Seal, label, date and freeze.
- **Sugar pack method:** This is preferable for cherries to be used for pies or other cooked products. To 1 quart (1 1/3 pounds) of cherries, add 3/4 cup sugar. Mix until sugar dissolves. Pack into containers, leaving 1/2-inch headspace. Seal, label, date and freeze.
- **Pectin pack method:** This alternative uses pectin and less sugar than the syrup pack and retains the fresh cherry flavor, color and texture. In a saucepan, combine 1 box of powdered pectin (1 3/4 ounces) with 1 cup water. Stir and boil 1 minute. Stir in 1/2 cup sugar and dissolve. Remove the pan from heat; add cold water to make 2 cups of syrup. Chill. Put cleaned and prepared fruit in a 4- to 6-quart bowl; add enough pectin syrup to glaze the fruit with a thin film. Gently fold fruit to coat each piece with syrup. Pack into freezer containers, leaving 1/2-inch headspace. Seal, label, date and freeze.

Sweet cherries:
Pack cherries into containers and cover with cold heavy syrup. Leave 1/2-inch headspace. (To make heavy syrup, add 3 ¼ cups of sugar to 5 cups of water.) Seal, label, date and freeze.

Canning

**Sweet or sour cherries:**
Choose mature, bright, uniformly colored cherries, ideal for canning. Stem and wash cherries. Remove pits, if desired. Place pitted cherries in water containing ascorbic acid to prevent stem-end discoloration. With a clean needle, prick skins of unpitted cherries on opposite sides to prevent splitting. You may can cherries in water, apple juice, white grape juice or medium or heavy syrup. Measure and mix the
Recipes

Cherry Freezer Jam

(makes 8 half pints)

3 cups pitted, ground cherries
1 box (1 3/4 ounces) powdered pectin and 1 cup of water,
or 1 pouch (3.175 ounces) liquid pectin
5 cups sugar

Mix cherries and pectin. Let stand about 20 to 30 minutes, stirring every 5 minutes. (If powdered pectin is used, combine it with water and boil 1 minute, stirring constantly.) Add sugar, stirring until sugar is well blended and completely dissolved. Pour jam into freezer containers, leaving 1/2-inch headspace. Let stand at room temperature for 24 hours to set. Label, date and freeze or store in the refrigerator for up to four weeks.

Cherry Syrup

(makes about 9 half pints)

6 1/2 cups fresh or frozen cherries
6 3/4 cups sugar

Select fresh or frozen fruit. If you use frozen fruit, thaw first. Wash, pit and stem fresh fruit. In a saucepan, crush the fruit. Heat to boiling and simmer 5 to 10 minutes until soft. Strain while hot through a colander, and drain until cool enough to handle. Strain the collected juice through a double layer of cheesecloth or a jelly bag. Discard the dry pulp. The pressed juice should yield about 4 1/2 to 5 cups. In a large saucepan, combine the juice with sugar. Bring to a boil and simmer 1 minute. (To make syrup with whole fruit pieces save 1 or 2 cups of the fresh or frozen fruit, and combine this with the sugar and simmer as in making regular syrup). Remove from heat. Skim off foam and fill hot, clean half pint or pint jars, leaving 1/2-inch headspace. Wipe jar rims, adjust lids and process in a boiling-water bath for 10 minutes.

For more recipes, see:


References


Find out more about Michigan Fresh at msue.anr.msu.edu/program/info/mi_fresh.

Recommended process times in boiling-water bath canner

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Style of Pack</th>
<th>Jar Size</th>
<th>0-1,000 ft.</th>
<th>1,001-3,000 ft.</th>
<th>3,001-6,000 ft.</th>
<th>Over 6,000 ft.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Raw Pack</td>
<td>Pints or Quarts</td>
<td>25 min.</td>
<td>30 min.</td>
<td>35 min.</td>
<td>40 min.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hot Pack</td>
<td>Pints</td>
<td>15 min.</td>
<td>20 min.</td>
<td>20 min.</td>
<td>35 min.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hot Pack</td>
<td>Quarts</td>
<td>20 min.</td>
<td>25 min.</td>
<td>30 min.</td>
<td>35 min.</td>
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