

What Are Sweet Cherries Good For?



The Scoop on Sweet Cherries

Botanical name: *Prunus cerasus*

Sweet and succulent with just the faintest hint of tartness, sweet cherries are firm, glossy, deep red, and larger than the sour cherry or "chokecherry" varieties. They're closely related to the wild cherries native to the Caucasus Mountain regions between the Black and Caspian seas. Like peaches and apricots, these little red fruits are drupes, containing a single seed.

Most sweet cherry varieties were developed from wild cherries, sometimes in university labs or by horticulturalists trying to coax out the sweetest flavors, begin the tree's growing season earlier, or make them more drought-tolerant. The Brooks sweet cherry variety, for instance, fares well in hot climates. Chelan is mahogany-red and one of the first sweet cherries to be harvested in Washington State. The famous heart-shaped Bing was named for the Chinese foreman who helped develop it in 1870s. Others sweet cherry cultivars are cross-bred between two or more existing varieties.

As a crop, sweet cherries can be considered high risk. They're highly desirable and therefore valuable, but the weather in the Northwest, where growing conditions are most favorable, can vary widely. Getting the cherries to optimal ripeness before birds harvest them first is another potential challenge, so nets are sometimes used to deter the crop from being carried away by natural predators in the air. Then there's disease, to which sweet cherries are highly susceptible - even more so than sour cherries. All these factors help drive the cost of sweet cherries a little higher, even in season.

An estimated 2,500 cherry growers in Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Utah, and Montana produce the most sweet cherries in the US. Iran, Turkey, Italy, and Spain also do well in this crop.

Many believe that sweet cherries are best when eaten fresh, but this fruit . naturally sweet without a speck of sugar . has been known to mix well with others, especially tart

ones. Luckily, sweet cherries freeze easily: Just rinse, drain thoroughly, blot with paper towel, spread them in a single layer on a baking sheet, and place in the freezer overnight. Once frozen, the cherries can be transferred to freezer bags and kept up to a year. Fresh cherries can last in the refrigerator for a couple of weeks.

Health Benefits of Sweet Cherries

One of the most interesting health benefits of sweet cherries is their completely unique set of antioxidants. Anthocyanin glycosides, which give sweet cherries their deep red-almost black color, are one of them. This compound also provides inflammatory properties, even against serious conditions such as gout, arthritis, fibromyalgia, or painful muscle-related sports injuries.

Sweet cherries contain the antioxidant melatonin, which can have a calming effect on brain neurons and the nervous system, soothing irritability, insomnia, headaches, and even helping to establish regular sleep patterns.

The health benefits of sweet cherries are multiple. Research shows a connection between eating sweet cherries and the prevention of Alzheimer's. Between the fiber, vitamin C, carotenoids, and anthocyanins, several types of cancers have been shown to be inhibited, and the cyanidin found in cherries significantly increases the free radical scavenging activity in the body. In fact, this is one of the most important ways cancer is shut down. Research shows that cherries may aid this benefit by blocking cancer cells from accessing the proteins they need to proliferate.

Sweet cherries are a good source of several minerals, such as potassium (good for the heart and blood pressure), iron, zinc, copper, and manganese. Cherry seeds contain prussic acid, which traditional medicine still makes use of (in extremely small doses) to relieve sore throat, chest and stomach pain - even labor pain. They also had a reputation as a tonic, antiseptic, and even to rid the body of worms and other parasites.

However, consume sweet cherries in moderation because they contain fructose, which may be harmful to your health in excessive amounts.

Sweet Cherries Nutrition Facts

Serving Size: 1 cup (145 grams) of sweet cherries, without pits

Amt. Per Serving	
Calories	91
Carbohydrates	23 g
Sugar	18 g
Fiber	3 g
Protein	1.5 g

Studies on Sweet Cherries

A study on how sweet cherries might affect blood cholesterol and inflammation involved 18 healthy men and women who added sweet cherries to their diets for 28 days. Blood tests were taken before, afterward, and halfway through the study. Results showed marked and positive anti-inflammatory effects, which the researchers reported should make sweet cherries beneficial for managing and preventing inflammatory diseases¹. In another study, scientists determined that anthocyanins like cyanidin and peonidin in sweet cherries, as well as hydroxycinnamic acids (including neochlorogenic acid, chlorogenic acid, and p-coumaric acid derivatives) have the ability to protect neuronal cells from damage. Phenols such as quercetin, kaempferol, and isorhamnetin were found to protect cells from oxidative stress, giving cherries what researchers termed "antineurodegenerative" abilities². Later studies showed these compounds may prove helpful in the prevention of Alzheimer's disease.

Sweet Cherries Healthy Recipes: Sun Sprout and Sweet Cherry Salad Recipe

Ingredients:

- 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil or garlic oil
- 1/2 teaspoon evaporated cane sugar
- 1/4 teaspoon black pepper flakes
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 1 onion, peeled and sliced
- 3 scallions . diced
- 24 cherries tomatoes, halved and pits removed
- 2 cups sunflower sprouts, washed and drained

- 2 tablespoons toasted sunflower seeds
- 1 large or 2 small heads of lettuce

Procedure:

Whisk the first 4 ingredients for the dressing. Toss dressing with sunflower sprouts, lettuce, scallions and onion together. Top with cherries. Sprinkle sunflower seeds before serving. Serve immediately.

(From TrustedEarth.com)

Sweet Cherries Fun Facts

Sweet cherries have been "around the world" for centuries. Greek writer Theophrastus described them in his writings, circa 300 B.C.E. They were cultivated in medieval European monastery gardens, and when the Normans invaded England in 1066, the sweet cherries they brought were the first taste of sweet cherries the Brits ever had.

The word "cherry" is a derivative of the French word "cerise," which comes from the Latin word cerasum, the classical name for Giresun, a city in present-day Turkey.

Summary

Native to the Caucasus Mountain regions, sweet cherries were once wild cherries, developed into hardier, sweeter, and sometimes prettier varieties that we know today. In the U.S., sweet cherries mostly grown in the upper Northwest states like Washington, North Dakota, and Montana, while Iran, Turkey, Italy, and Spain provide other areas of the globe.

Nutritionally, this small, dark red fruit contains anthocyanin glycosides, which can relieve gout, arthritis, and fibromyalgia pain. The vitamin C, fiber, and carotenoids inhibit several types of cancers, and the cyanidin increases free radical scavenging activity. In comparison with sour cherries, sweet cherries could be called a completely different fruit, wildly popular for snacking or as an addition to fruit salads and confections