

FUN FACES OF WISCONSIN AGRICULTURE *BERRY BUNCH'S CHERRY FAST FACTS (8/2011)*



Production Information

Cherries grow on trees and can be found in orchards. They prefer sandy soil because of the better drainage. It usually will take 4-5 years before a tree can produce enough cherries for harvest.

Red tart cherry trees are very hardy. The roots will store the nutrients over the winter so that is when cherry farmers will prune the trees. If you don't prune regularly, the cherry trees will get very thick in the middle and it's difficult for sunlight to reach the cherries. Cherry blossom time (early May) is a beautiful time to visit a cherry orchard. The blossoms will leave behind the green buds which will become the red cherry that is later harvested. Trees are fertilized in the spring and grass is cut in the orchard and weeds control is necessary. New trees are also planted in the spring. Trees need to be sprayed regularly to prevent pests from damaging the fruit.

Most trees are mechanically harvested using a "shaker" which is a mechanical arm that reaches out and clamps on the trunk of the tree. The ripe cherries will fall down onto a large catching frame. The cherries will go via a conveyor belt to pallet tanks that are cooled with 45 degree water. The cherries are kept in the water for several hours with the water constantly being flushed. From there, the stems and pits are taken out and they are processed into the final product.

Wisconsin Production

Door County cherries account for over 95% of all tart cherries produced in Wisconsin. In 2009, Wisconsin produced about 10.9 million pounds of tart cherries. There are over 1,800 acres of Montmorency tart cherries and 50 acres of sweet cherries grown in Door County.

Why Door County? The quantity and quality of fruit depends on the climatic conditions. Lake Michigan tempers the winter winds and cools the orchards in the summer.

Career Information

Orchard owners must know how to prune trees, fertilize and watch for diseases and pests. Crop scouts can help control pest and diseases. Seasonal laborers can assist with harvest time. People in food processing handle the fruit from the farm until they are made into juices, preserves, canned, dried or frozen. Food scientists and nutritionist study the health benefits of cherries for consumers.

Trivia

- February is National Cherry Month.
- The average American eats 1 pound of tart cherries each year.
- It takes 250 cherries to make one pie.
- There are about 7,000 cherries on the average size tree- enough for 28 pies.
- Eating 20 cherries a day will reduce headaches.

Other Information

Montmorency is the primary variety of tart cherry. The fruit is suited for pies, preserves and juice. It is ruby-red in color, has a light-colored flesh and juice, and is seldom sold fresh. Most of Montmorency cherries are canned, frozen and dried.

Maraschino cherries are made from sweet cherries. They are used on ice cream sundaes, in drinks and on desserts. Bing cherries are a popular sweet cherry variety.

The U.S. Cherry industry produces more than 650 million pounds of tart and sweet cherries each year. Most of the cherry production is in Michigan (75% of tart cherries) and the Northwest. Oregon and Washington harvest about 60% of the sweet cherry crop.