

# Using, Storing and Preserving Cherries



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*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 Bing, Lambert, Royal Anne and Tartarian 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

1 pint	=	3/4 pound or 2 cups
1 quart	=	1 1/2 pounds or 4 cups
1 lug	=	25 pounds or 8 to 12 quarts of canned cherries
1 pound (unpitted) cherries	=	1 3/4 cups pitted

## 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 1/4 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

(Canning, continued on back)

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# 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.

(**Canning**, continued from front)

quantities of sugar and water necessary to make the kind of syrup you desire. For medium syrup, use 1 3/4 cups of sugar to 4 cups of water and for heavy syrup use 2 3/4 cups of sugar to 4 cups of water. Bring sugar and water mixture to a boil and stir to dissolve the sugar. Keep mixture hot until ready for use.

NOTE: Splenda is the only sugar substitute you can use when canning fruit. You may need to experiment to determine your preferred level of sweetness.

Can cherries using one of the following methods:

- **Hot pack method:** In a large saucepan, add 1/2 cup of water, juice or syrup for each quart of drained fruit and bring to a boil. Fill hot jars with cherries and cooking liquid, leaving 1/2-inch headspace. Fill jar to 1/2 inch from top with hot liquid. Remove air bubbles. Wipe jar rims, adjust lids and process in a boiling-water bath.
- **Raw pack method:** Add 1/2 cup of hot water, juice or syrup to each hot jar. Fill jars with drained cherries, shaking down gently as you fill. Add more hot liquid, leaving 1/2-inch headspace. Remove air bubbles. Wipe jar rims, adjust lids and process in a boiling-water bath. Let jars sit undisturbed for 24 hours. Remove rings and wash jars. Date, label and store.

### Recommended process times in boiling-water bath canner

Style of Pack	Jar Size	0-1,000 ft.	1,001-3,000 ft.	3,001-6,000 ft.	Over 6,000 ft.
Raw Pack	Pints or Quarts	25 min.	30 min.	35 min.	40 min.
Hot Pack	Pints	15 min.	20 min.	20 min.	25 min.
Hot Pack	Quarts	20 min.	25 min.	30 min.	35 min.

## For more recipes, see:

U.S. Department of Agriculture. (2009). *Complete guide to home canning* (Rev. ed.). (Agriculture Information Bulletin No. 539). Washington, DC: Author. ([http://nchfp.uga.edu/publications/publications\\_usda.html](http://nchfp.uga.edu/publications/publications_usda.html))

University of Georgia Cooperative Extension. (2006). *So easy to preserve* (5th ed.). Athens, GA: Author. (<http://setp.uga.edu/>)

## References

Michigan State University Extension. (2005). *How much should I buy? A guide to fresh fruits and vegetables for home cooking*. (CYFC064). East Lansing, MI: Author.

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*This bulletin replaces WO1041 Food Preservation Series – Cherries (Michigan State University Extension, 2006).*

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