



Cherries
Not just another berry.

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CHERRIES: “AMERICA’S SUPER FRUIT” OFFERS HOMEGROWN HEALTH BENEFITS

LANSING, Mich., February 3, 2009 – Cherries are not only good for you, but they’re also on trend as a homegrown “Super Fruit.” According to recent data, more than 9 out of 10 Americans want to know where their food comes from, nearly 80 percent say they’re purchasing “locally produced” products, and the majority are defining “local” as made in America.^{1,2} And cherries deliver.

About ninety-five percent of cherries consumed in the U.S. are grown here, with most coming from Michigan, Wisconsin, Utah, Washington, Oregon, Pennsylvania and New York.

Food and nutrition experts, including registered dietitian and host of the Food Network’s “Healthy Appetite” Ellie Krieger, say the homegrown advantage, coupled with powerful health benefits, make cherries “America’s Super Fruit.”

“Cherries offer some of the most important attributes people are seeking in their foods today,” said Krieger. “While exotic berries may be ‘trendy,’ as a chef and dietitian I choose cherries, an all-American favorite, because they deliver a powerful combination of good nutrition, local sourcing and environmental sustainability.”

“America’s Super Fruit” also delivers on safety. As stewards of the environment, the cherry industry has been at the forefront of sustainable growing practices and responsible pesticide research for many years.

Homegrown Heart Health Benefits

As February is American Heart Month, it’s no wonder it’s also National Cherry Month. The antioxidant compounds – called anthocyanins – that give cherries their RED color continue to demonstrate heart-health benefits. Recent studies from the University of Michigan revealed that cherry-enriched diets in animals lowered multiple risk factors for heart disease. In 2007, researchers found that cherry-enriched diets in animals lowered total blood cholesterol levels and reduced triglycerides (fatty acids).³ And, in 2008, the University of Michigan researchers found animals fed a cherry-enriched diet saw reduced total body weight and fat by 14 percent, in particular the “belly fat” that is most often associated with heart disease risk.⁴

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“As we increasingly look for ways to improve health and fight disease with foods, it’s exciting to see more and more studies suggest that simple dietary changes, such as including tart cherries, could help decrease the risk for heart disease,” said Dr. Steven Bolling, a cardiac surgeon at the University of Michigan Cardiovascular Center who also heads the U-M Cardioprotection Research Laboratory. “The fact they come from Michigan and around the United States is an added bonus.”

It’s Easy to Enjoy “America’s Super Fruit”

In addition to being grown in the U.S., tart cherries come in dried, frozen and juice forms so they’re readily available to enjoy all year long.

Krieger says being able to make foods a habit is an important factor in sustaining a healthful diet. “Creating a routine with foods you like is one of the most successful strategies for a long-term, healthful diet plan,” said Krieger. “And, with heart disease continuing to be the number one killer in America, being able to incorporate heart-healthy foods like cherries in almost any meal or snacktime makes it easy and enjoyable to protect your heart.”

To learn more about the health benefits of cherries and to find recipes and tips, visit www.choosecherries.com. There you can also download a copy of the Cherry Nutrition Report, a compendium of the more than 65 published studies on the potential health benefits of cherries.

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The Cherry Marketing Institute (CMI) is an organization funded by North American tart cherry growers and processors. CMI’s mission is to increase the demand for tart cherries through promotion, market expansion, product development and research. For more information on the science supporting the unique health benefits of cherries and for cherry recipes and menu ideas, visit www.choosecherries.com.

1: Survey conducted by IRI Data, 2008

2: Survey conducted by The Hartman Group, 2008

3: Seymour EM, Singer AAM, Bennink MR, Bolling SF. Cherry-enriched diets reduce metabolic syndrome and oxidative stress in lean Dahl-SS rats. *Experimental Biology* 2007 225.8, Presented in minisymposium 225, Dietary Bioactive Compounds: Chronic Disease Risk Reduction.

4: Seymour EM, Lewis A, Kirakosyan A, Bolling S. *The Effect of Tart Cherry-Enriched Diets on Abdominal Fat Gene Expression in Rats*. American Dietetic Association FNCE 2008.