Cherries
Not just another berry.

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RED COLOR IN CHERRIES SIGNALS DISEASE-FIGHTING PHYTONUTRIENTS

Powerful red pigments called anthocyanins increasingly recognized for their health-promoting benefits

Sept. 12, 2007 – Vibrant shades of leaves don't just signal autumn is near. Experts say when it comes to food, color is a cue for good health.

The pigments in leaves that provide the bright red color in the fall are anthocyanins, which are potent antioxidants that also are found in red and purple fruits and vegetables – especially tart cherries, red cabbage, eggplant and purple corn.

Anthocyanins are red hot, with a growing number of studies indicating that these plant pigments have powerful anti-aging and anti-inflammatory properties, which may help reduce the risk of heart disease, diabetes and certain cancers.

A recent study conducted at The Ohio State University found that anthocyanin extracts from fruits and vegetables helped slow the growth of colon cancer cells. [i]

Additional research from the University of Michigan suggests that anthocyanin-rich tart cherries may help lower the risk of metabolic syndrome and heart disease. [ii] In this animal study, researchers found that adding powdered tart cherries to the diet lowered cholesterol, lowered blood sugar, lead to less fat storage in the liver and improved antioxidant defenses.

"We are enthusiastic about the findings that tart cherries provided an array of beneficial effects at such a modest daily intake," said lead researcher E. Mitchell Seymour. "Our findings add to the evidence that anthocyanin-containing foods in reasonable portion sizes have the ability to enhance health and potentially lower the risk of chronic disease."

The amount of tart cherries used in the study is estimated to be about 1 ¼ to 1 ½ cups of whole frozen cherries or a little more than ½ cup of dried cherries a day.

Cherries are Packed with Anthocyanins

Tart cherries contain a unique combination of up to eight different types of anthocyanins, which belong to a class of plant compounds called flavonoids. Until recently, anthocyanins were fairly unknown, but that's changing, according to food trends expert Dr. Elizabeth Sloan, president of Sloan Trends, Inc.

"Anthocyanins are the next big thing in health," Sloan said. "Lutein and lycopene were the first types of plant compounds or phytonutrients to be added to consumer's lexicon, but now anthocyanins are taking the spotlight."

Sloan said the combination of taste, health and convenience make cherries one of today's hottest new super fruits. Tart cherries are an ideal "fall fruit" because they're available year-round as dried, frozen and juice/juice concentrate.

In addition to the powerful disease-fighting anthocyanins, cherries contain comparable amounts of antioxidants as blueberries and are one of the few known food sources of melatonin, a potent antioxidant that may help improve the body's natural sleep patterns.

Cherries also pack a powerful nutrient punch. Each serving is a good source of vitamin A (beta carotene) – containing 19 times the beta carotene of blueberries and strawberries. Cherries also are rich in vitamin C, potassium, magnesium, folate and fiber.

To learn more about the science supporting the health benefits of cherries visit www.choosecherries.com. You can download a copy of "The Cherry Nutrition Report" and find tasty cherry recipes, menu ideas and information on where you can buy tart cherry products.

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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.

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[i] Giusti MM. Effect of glycosylation and acylation on the chemoprotective effects of anthocyanins. American Chemical Society National Meeting. 2007. Abstract 255-OR.

[ii] 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.