



Cherries

Not just another berry.

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CHERRIES EMERGE AS THE NEW ANTIOXIDANT SUPERFRUIT
First-Ever “Cherry Nutrition Report” Reveals an Array of Surprising Health Benefits of Cherries

NEW YORK, February 6, 2007 – Health-conscious consumers are abuzz about new exotic berries from the Amazon with names they can’t even pronounce. But nutrition researchers say they may be missing a home-grown “superfruit” that provides surprisingly similar amounts of antioxidants: **cherries**.

A growing body of scientific research shows that tart cherries – which are available year-round as dried and frozen cherries or cherry juice – **have among the highest levels of disease-fighting antioxidants** compared to other fruits. Most people don’t know that. A recent survey* found that less than half (37%) believe cherries are high in antioxidants. Yet 7 out of 10 people said if they knew cherries were as nutritious as blueberries or other berries they would choose cherries.

Today, with the help of some leading health experts, the cherry industry launched a new consumer education campaign and unveiled “The Cherry Nutrition Report.” Available at www.choosecherries.com, the new report is the first compendium of peer-reviewed cherry-related studies, and documents the surprisingly high levels of antioxidants in tart cherries. It also reviews the array of research that links cherries to a variety of health benefits – from easing the pain of arthritis and gout to offering potential protection against heart disease and certain cancers.

“There’s a significant body of evidence suggesting that cherries are one of the most nutritious fruits you can eat,” said panel member Russel J. Reiter, Ph.D., a

prominent nutrition researcher at the University of Texas Health Science Center in San Antonio. Reiter has pioneered many of the studies on tart cherries.

“Cherries not only contain significant levels of antioxidants, but they provide a unique combination of antioxidants that are not found in other fruits,” Reiter said. “The compounds in cherries act as potent antioxidants that appear to have anti-inflammatory benefits, which may be particularly valuable for aging baby boomers suffering from joint pain.”

For decades, cherries have quietly grown a devoted fan base of arthritis sufferers who attributed tart cherries (especially tart cherry juice concentrate) to pain relief. Now the research by Reiter and others have put science behind the cherry folklore.

“The evidence was always anecdotal, but it was repeated so often and by so many people that it made us think there was something to it,” Reiter said. “That’s why we’ve explored this connection from a scientific standpoint.”

In the last few years, studies seem to have validated the anecdotal claims. Research indicates that cherries help inhibit enzymes in the body that are associated with inflammation. The compounds in cherries were found to have similar activity as aspirin and ibuprofen.

The Power of Red

Cherries contain powerful antioxidants called anthocyanins, which provide the distinctive red color of tart cherries and may hold the key to the benefits locked inside. These rich red pigments are a type of phytonutrient known as flavonoids, which have been linked to a variety of health benefits – from potential protection against heart disease and cancer to keeping the brain sharp.

Research conducted at Michigan State University found that cherries are the richest source of anthocyanins 1 and 2 – which help block cyclooxygenase 1 and 2, termed COX-1 and COX-2. Some pain medication works by inhibiting COX-1 and COX-2, which may explain why cherries seem to help ease the pain of arthritis and gout.

The researchers found cherries were the highest in these beneficial compounds compared to various berries such as blackberries and strawberries. Anthocyanins 1 and 2 are not found in blueberries.

Additionally, cherries are one of the few food sources of melatonin, a potent antioxidant that helps improve the body's circadian rhythms and natural sleep patterns, according to studies conducted by Reiter, who is the author of "Melatonin" (Bantam Books) and is one of the world's leading authorities on melatonin.

Reiter and colleagues in Texas speculate that eating just a handful of tart cherries may help increase melatonin levels in the blood – thereby promoting a more restful sleep.

More recent studies reviewed in the "Cherry Nutrition Report" suggest that compounds in tart cherries may help lower blood cholesterol and reduce the risk of insulin resistance syndrome, or pre-diabetes, which has become an epidemic in this country.

Survey Reveals Consumers Don't Know the Truth about Cherries

Most consumers seem to be in the dark about the antioxidant content and nutritional value of cherries. In a recent survey of 1,000 consumers, cherries were ranked as the "least nutritious" fruit when compared with other fruits including blueberries, apples and bananas. However, cherries were on top when it came to taste. Twice as many consumers (62%) prefer the taste of cherries compared to blueberries (30%).

"People love the taste of cherries but they tend to think about pie and other desserts," said panel member Ellie Krieger, MS, RD, nutritionist and host of the Food Network's "Healthy Appetite" show. "They also think of cherries as just a summertime treat, but tart cherries are available every month of the year as dried, frozen or juice, so it's easy to incorporate these antioxidant powerhouses into your daily diet."

This may be particularly important for older adults. Conclusions from the "Cherry Nutrition Report" suggest that tart cherries may offer protection against age-related diseases.

"Any thing that you currently make with berries, from oatmeal to muffins, you can easily substitute cherries," she added.

To get a copy of "The Cherry Nutrition Report" and to learn more about the unique health benefits of tart cherries, visit www.choosecherries.com. You can also find

new cherry recipes, menu ideas, and more 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.

* Survey of 1,000 adults conducted by Opinion Research Corporation's Caravan Services, December 14, 2006 on behalf of the Cherry Marketing Institute.