



## DEAR SCHOOL NUTRITION DIRECTOR:

We want you to get to know Montmorency tart cherries. These ruby-red fruits are included on the USDA Foods Available List – allowing you endless opportunities to add a burst of bright color and on-trend taste to school meals, including breakfasts, lunches, snacks, suppers and summer food service programs.

We know you work hard to balance the many factors required to meet school regulations while creating dishes that bring more customers into your cafeterias. It can be a challenge to offer the required amounts of fruit and vegetable options while controlling costs and minimizing waste – especially when the availability of produce is problematic due to weather conditions or other events.

The great news is that you have access to several convenient forms of U.S.-grown Montmorency tart cherries that are always “in season,” with year-round availability:

**Dried tart cherries (USDA #100299)**

**Individually Quick Frozen (IQF) tart cherries (USDA #100237)**

**Water-packed canned tart cherries (USDA #100228)**

Montmorency tart cherries are American grown – making them ideal for your **Farm to School** programs. And for those states participating in USDA’s ***Pilot Project for Procurement of Unprocessed Fruits and Vegetables***, you’ll be able to spend your entitlement funds on dried and frozen tart cherries. Both of these forms qualify as unprocessed. The goal is to make it easier for schools to purchase locally grown tart cherries in **Michigan, New York, Oregon, Washington** and **Wisconsin** – the major tart cherry-producing states in the U.S.

We’ve put together this toolkit with the help of our consultants, Dayle Hayes, MS, RD, and Malissa Marsden, SNS, to make it easier for you to include tart cherries in your program. Enclosed you’ll find four brand-new, kid-tested recipes – and more than two dozen other ideas for serving USDA tart cherries in school meals.

**Pancake Parfait with Tart Cherries** – a unique and versatile concept for K-12 school breakfast programs

**Tart Cherry Pancake Bar** – a grab-and-go breakfast option with the fruit and syrup built into the bar

**Tart Cherry Chicken Salad** – a tasty combination of chicken and cherries for a sandwich or entrée salad

**Cherry-Q Dipping Sauce** – a cherry-infused low sodium BBQ sauce for chicken fingers or nuggets

You’ll find many ideas in our toolkit to inspire you to choose cherries – a versatile and kid-pleasing addition to your program. We hope you’ll add dried, frozen or canned tart cherries to your USDA food purchases.

Your friends at the Cherry Marketing Institute

# CHOOSE CHERRIES FOR YOUR SCHOOL MEALS

KIDS WILL LOVE THE BURST OF BRIGHT RED COLOR AND ON-TREND TASTE

Schools have access to a fruit option that kids will love: cherries.

Several forms of U.S.-grown Montmorency tart cherries are included on the USDA Foods Available List – allowing you endless opportunities to brighten up school meals, including breakfasts, lunches, snacks, suppers and summer food service programs.

Montmorency tart cherries are American-grown, making them ideal for your Farm to School programs. About 75 percent of U.S. tart cherries are grown in Michigan, while other major tart cherry-growing states include New York, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Utah, Washington and Wisconsin. Tart cherries are typically grown on small, generations-old family farms. These bright red stone fruits are shaken from trees in the orchards during harvest, which is in July and August.

Since you can order USDA dried, frozen and canned tart cherries, you can serve this tasty, nutritious fruit year-round. Luckily for your customers, they're always in season. Think about the many ways you can include tart cherries in your school celebrations throughout the year:

## **National Cherry Month** in February

**Presidents' Day** – Tying to the lore of George Washington cutting down his dad's cherry tree

**Veterans Day, Memorial Day, Fourth of July, Patriot Day** – Or any time you're looking for patriotic colors, all-American tart cherries can provide the needed red layer in red, white and blue food

**National School Breakfast Week** in March – Add tart cherries to yogurt parfaits, smoothies, cereals, muffins and quick breads; and serve our Pancake Parfait with Tart Cherries and Tart Cherry Pancake Bar

**Cherry Blossom Festival** – A perfect time to menu cherries during this annual springtime celebration

**National Barbecue Month** in May – Spice things up with our Cherry-Q Dipping Sauce

**National Cherry Cobbler Day** on May 17 – For that occasional treat, substitute tart cherries in your favorite crisp or cobbler recipe

**National Chicken Month** in September – Celebrate with our Tart Cherry Chicken Salad

**National School Lunch Week** in October – Showcase ways you're menuing this all-American fruit



**DRIED TART CHERRIES, ¼ CUP CREDITS AS ½ CUP OF FRUIT**



**FROZEN TART CHERRIES (IQF), ½ CUP CREDITS AS ½ CUP OF FRUIT**



**CANNED TART CHERRIES, ½ CUP CREDITS AS ½ CUP OF FRUIT**

Add tart cherries to your USDA foods purchases or contact your state distributing agency to order tart cherries for your menus.

# TART CHERRIES GO TO SCHOOL

## EASY WAYS TO USE THESE USDA FOODS ON SCHOOL MENUS

We know fruits and vegetables are a top priority for school nutrition professionals. Having tart cherries on the USDA Foods Available List makes it easy for you to offer a kid-pleasing fruit option that's deliciously versatile.

Shelf-stable dried cherries are ideal for adding to cereal, granola bars or muffins for grab-and-go breakfasts. Or offer dried cherries as an easy finger fruit for Breakfast in the Classroom. Since dried fruit is creditable at twice its volume, a small soufflé cup filled with  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup of dried cherries credits as  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of fruit. At lunch, add dried cherries to salad bars and mix into whole-grain side dishes.

**SUBSTITUTE DRIED TART CHERRIES IN PLACE OF OTHER DRIED FRUITS IN RECIPES**

Frozen and canned tart cherries are an amazingly flexible fruit – tasty in entrées, sides, baked products, smoothies, yogurt parfaits and desserts. Both versions – IQF and water-packed canned – come to you unsweetened.

Throughout the school day, here are ways you can add a punch of color, flavor and nutrition with USDA tart cherries:

### BREAKFAST

**Yogurt parfaits.** Layer dried or IQF frozen tart cherries in yogurt parfaits made with either regular or Greek yogurt and cereal or granola. Add the IQF tart cherries while frozen; the dried cherries will plump up overnight in the yogurt.

**Smoothies.** Blend IQF frozen or canned cherries into yogurt smoothies. No need to thaw the IQF cherries. Use alone or combine with other fruits and vegetables.

**Fruit toppings.** Add tart cherries as a topping for your build-your-own yogurt parfait or oatmeal bars. Make a glaze, syrup or warm compote for whole-grain pancakes and waffles. Offer as a topping for cereal and bagels with cream cheese.

**Baked products.** Use dried or IQF frozen tart cherries in your house-made muffins, scones, quick breads, granola bars, yeast breads and cinnamon rolls.



### LUNCH

**Salads.** Add dried tart cherries to a shaker or entrée salad for eye-appeal, flavor and a nutrient boost. Offer dried tart cherries as a salad bar topping, and serve with spring mix, spinach or kale as a side salad.

**Grains.** Mix dried tart cherries into your trendy whole-grain sides made with quinoa, farro, bulgur or wheat berries. Add to brown rice, pasta salads and Asian noodle salads. Just  $\frac{1}{8}$  cup of dried cherries credits as  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup of fruit.

**Sandwiches.** Add dried tart cherries to chicken salads on breads, wraps or flatbreads rich in whole grains. Sprinkle on a turkey roll-up or pita sandwich.





**Salsa and sauces.** Chop tart cherries for fresh salsas to top tacos, fish and other meats. Use IQF frozen or canned tart cherries to make a BBQ sauce for pulled pork or chicken sandwiches, or a dipping sauce for baked chicken tenders.

**Desserts.** For an occasional treat, use frozen or canned tart cherries in a cobbler or crisp. Or try adding some dried tart cherries to your apple or peach cobbler recipe.



## SNACKS

**Granola.** Add ¼ cup of dried tart cherries to granola or trail mix. Make your own scratch recipe or add the tart cherries to a commercial mix.

**Power packs.** Are you preparing some of the popular power packs for athletes – with hard-cooked egg or cheese, crackers or bread, fruit and milk? Dried tart cherries make an ideal fruit component for these packs.

**Grain-based snacks.** Add tart cherries to your house-made granola bars and whole-grain muffins.

**Finger fruit.** Simply serve dried tart cherries in a soufflé cup for a portable, tasty snack.



Add tart cherries to your USDA foods purchases or contact your state distributing agency to order tart cherries for your menus.



# BRINGING TART CHERRIES TO YOUR SCHOOL

ADD TART CHERRIES TO YOUR USDA FOODS PURCHASES OR CONTACT YOUR STATE DISTRIBUTING AGENCY TO ORDER TART CHERRIES FOR YOUR SCHOOL MENUS

## USDA FOODS AVAILABLE LIST

ITEM	USDA MATERIAL #	CREDITING	PACK SIZE	YIELD
Dried Tart Cherries	#100299	¼ cup dried cherries credits as ½ cup fruit	Four 4-lb. bags	188 ¼-cup servings
IQF Frozen Tart Cherries, Unsweetened	#100237	½ cup cherries credits as ½ cup fruit	40 lb. container	140 ½-cup servings, drained fruit; 225 ½-cup servings, fruit and juice
Canned Tart Cherries, Unsweetened	#100228	½ cup canned cherries credits as ½ cup fruit	Six #10 cans	109 ½-cup servings drained fruit

**USDA Tart Cherries** are prepared from freshly picked Montmorency tart cherries that are grown in the U.S. The fruit is carefully harvested, washed and cooled. The tart cherries are then sized, de-stemmed, sorted, pitted, and either canned, frozen or juiced. The frozen cherries either remain frozen as IQF cherries or they are processed into dried cherries.

## DRIED TART CHERRIES

This item is U.S. Grade B or better dried tart cherries that may contain added sweeteners. No additives or preservatives other than sweeteners are used in processing.

**Packaging:** Packed in cases of four 4-pound bags.

**Handling and Storage:** In general, dried tart cherries can be frozen, refrigerated or stored in a cool dry storage below 50°F. The minimum shelf life is 12 months from date of delivery when stored as directed by the processor.

**Yield:** One case of dried tart cherries yields about 188 ¼-cup servings.

**Child Nutrition Crediting:** ¼ cup dried tart cherries credits as ½ cup fruit.

**Nutrition Facts per Serving (1/4 cup):** 133 calories, 0 g fat, 0 g saturated fat, 0 g trans fat, 0 mg cholesterol, 5 mg sodium, 32 g total carbohydrate, 1 g dietary fiber, 27 g sugars, 1 g protein, 1132 IU vitamin A, 8 mg vitamin C, 0 IU vitamin D, 0 mg iron.



### TART CHERRIES, INDIVIDUALLY QUICK FROZEN (IQF)

This item is U.S. Grade B or better tart cherries without added sugar. No additives, preservatives, coloring agents or sweeteners are added – only 100 percent red pitted tart cherries that have been individually quick frozen.

**Packaging:** Packed IQF in a 40-pound poly-lined box.

**Handling and Storage:** Products must be shipped and stored at 0°F (-18°C) or below. The shelf life is 24 months when stored as required.

**Yield:** One 40-pound case IQF tart cherries yields about 140 ½-cup servings of drained fruit, or 225 ½-cup servings of fruit and juice.

**Child Nutrition Crediting:** ½ cup IQF tart cherries credits as ½ cup fruit.

**Nutrition Facts per Serving (1/2 cup):** 36 calories, 0 g fat, 0 g saturated fat, 0 g trans fat, 0 mg cholesterol, 1 mg sodium, 9 g total carbohydrate, 1 g dietary fiber, 7 g sugars, 1 g protein, 674 IU vitamin A, 2 mg vitamin C, 0 IU vitamin D, 0 mg iron.



### CANNED TART CHERRIES, UNSWEETENED

This item is U.S. Grade B tart cherries that have been pitted and packed in water. No added sugars.

**Packaging:** Packed into cases of six #10 cans.

**Handling and Storage:** Store at room temperature, above freezing. The shelf life is 24 months when stored properly.

**Yield:** One case of canned tart cherries (drained) yields about 109 ½-cup servings.

**Child Nutrition Crediting:** ½ cup canned tart cherries credits as ½ cup fruit.

**Nutrition Facts per Serving (1/2 cup):** 44 calories, 0 g fat, 0 g saturated fat, 0 g trans fat, 0 mg cholesterol, 9 mg sodium, 11 g total carbohydrate, 1 g dietary fiber, 9 g sugars, 1 g protein, 920 IU vitamin A, 2 mg vitamin C, 0 IU vitamin D, 2 mg iron.



### FOOD BUYING GUIDE TART CHERRY YIELDS PER 1/2 CUP SERVING

ITEM	USDA MATERIAL #	DESCRIPTION	# OF SERVINGS	EXACT QUANTITY	PURCHASE QUANTITY	PURCHASE UNIT	PORTION IN OUNCES
Dried Tart Cherries	#100299	dried cherries	100	8.47	8.5	LB	1.36
IQF Tart Cherries	#100237	cherries and juice	100	17.54	17.75	LB	2.81
IQF Tart Cherries	#100237	drained cherries	100	28.57	28.75	LB	4.57
IQF Tart Cherries	#100237	cooked cherries and juice	100	33.9	34	LB	5.42
Canned Tart Cherries	#100228	cherries and juice	100	27.43	27.50	LB	4.40
Canned Tart Cherries	#100228	drained cherries	100	34.48	34.50	LB	5.52



# CHEERS TO CHERRIES

WHAT YOU AND YOUR STUDENTS NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THIS ALL-AMERICAN FRUIT

Life is just a bowl of cherries. Put a cherry on top. As American as cherry pie. It seems the cherry is always linked to something good. After all, everyone loves cherries.

How much do you know about this popular ruby-red fruit?

The cherry is one of the world's oldest cultivated fruits, along with its cousin, the apricot. Both of these fruits are classified as stone fruits (because of the hard pit inside), along with peaches, plums and nectarines.

Ancient Romans loved their cherries. They were also cherished by Chinese noblemen and ancient Greeks. New settlers to America brought over their favorite European varieties, including the Montmorency cherry, which is now the most popular type of tart cherry grown in the U.S.

About 75 percent of U.S. tart cherries are grown in Michigan. In fact, that's where you can find the ultimate celebration of cherries at the National Cherry Festival, which is held every year in July in Traverse City, the "Cherry Capital of the World." Tart cherries are also grown in New York, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Washington, Wisconsin and Utah.



## FUN FACTS

- Cherries are a member of the rose family.
- There are over 1,000 different varieties of cherries, and the two main types are sweet (*Prunus avium*) and tart (*Prunus cerasus*).
- A tart cherry tree produces about 30 pies' worth of fruit each year.
- One hundred tart cherries are inside an 8-ounce glass of tart cherry juice.
- Dried, frozen and canned tart cherries are an excellent source of vitamin A.
- Tart cherries contain a natural compound called anthocyanins that provide their bright red color and distinctive taste.
- Studies have explored the potential benefits of Montmorency tart cherries, ranging from inflammation and exercise recovery to sleep.

## HOW TO ENJOY TART CHERRIES:

Montmorency tart cherries are famous for pies, but now they're available in dried and frozen forms and are showing up in all sorts of places: granola bars, trail mixes, cereals, salads and other foods. One hundred percent tart cherry juice is also popular, especially among athletes who are using the juice as an exercise recovery drink.

**Make** a smoothie with frozen tart cherries.

**Add** tart cherries to muffins, pancakes, quick breads and cookies.

**Top** hot or cold cereal with dried tart cherries.

**Make** your own trail mix with dried tart cherries.

**Add** dried tart cherries to salads, rice dishes and whole grains.

**Enjoy** an all-American cherry pie or turn your cherries into a cobbler or crisp.