



MEDIA Release

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Get Set for a Very Cherry Summer

Despite some damage to the crop caused by the recent frosts, Victorian cherry growers are reporting a good crops this year. Cherry lovers can get set for a delicious season with plenty of local fruit from mid November through to mid-January.

Victorian growers have increased tree plantings in those parts of the state where cherries will mature earlier. With large numbers of trees planted in warmer areas such as Cobram and along the Murray River and in elevated areas such as Strathbogie Ranges, Gisborne, Beechworth and Mansfield, cherry lovers will soon enjoy locally grown fruit for an extended season, from early November through to the end of January each year.

As well as extending the season, local growers have refined the varieties they bring to market to our very favourite ones. These include Merchant, Ron, Ulster, Bing, Lapin and Sweetheart, all considered the best because of their rich and sweet flavours and gorgeous deep colours.

Cherries are full of natural goodness The Victorian Cherry Association recently commissioned a desk study into the nutritional benefits of cherries and this found there was a strong case to recommend at least one serve of cherries per day, with additional servings bringing greater health benefits.

There are many reasons cherries are good for you. In particular, they contain a unique combination of vitamins, minerals, anti-oxidants and anti-inflammatory compounds which act together to deliver health benefits not available from supplements.

Fresh foods not only retain more of their nutrients than processed foods and supplements, but these act together to naturally provide the body with a more complex and more potent mix of the compounds it requires to prevent disease.

Sweet cherries contain 16 antioxidants to help clear the body of damaging free radicals. Antioxidants are most effectively acquired through diet and help to prevent degeneration and disease including cardiovascular disease, arthritis, cancer, inflammatory conditions and neurological diseases.

The study also concluded that cherries have significant health benefits in slowing or inhibiting the progression of cancer, ageing, neurological diseases, cardiovascular disease and inflammatory conditions.

There are only 224 kilojoules per 100 grams and almost no fat, so cherries cherry lovers can indulge to their heart's content.

While prices vary from state to state and throughout the season, you can expect to pay between \$10.00 and \$20.00 per kilo in store (larger fruit may attract higher prices).

Tips for storing and pitting cherries:

Cherries are best stored unwashed and packed loosely (to minimise bruising) in a plastic bag in the refrigerator, or place them in a shallow container in a single layer and cover with plastic wrap. Wash just prior to eating. Fresh cherries are best eaten within three days of purchase.

To pit cherries for cooking, halve them with a paring knife and pry out the pit with the tip of the knife, or use a cherry or olive pitter that can be found in any good home-ware store.

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