

LET'S PRESERVE

Cherries

Recommended Varieties

All sweet or sour cherries can be used.

Quantity

An average of 17½ pounds makes a 7-quart canner load; 11 pounds makes 9 pints. An average of 1⅔ pounds makes 1 pint of frozen cherries.

Quality

Select freshly harvested cherries with deep, uniform color and ideal maturity for eating fresh. Cherries should be firm in texture and have a snap in the skin with each bite. Overripe cherries are dull and have a dried stem. Don't delay preserving them.

Preparation

All produce should be properly washed before it is consumed or preserved. Rinse cherries under cold running water in a colander. Toss or agitate the fruit while rinsing. Do not soak produce in water. Remove stems and, if desired, remove pits. If pitted, immediately place cherries into a solution containing 1 teaspoon of powdered ascorbic acid or six finely crushed 500-milligram vitamin C tablets per gallon of cold water to prevent stem end discoloration. If preserved unpitted, prick skins on opposite sides with a clean needle to prevent splitting.

Freezing Procedure

Don't freeze more than 2 pounds of food per cubic foot of freezer capacity per day. Cherries may be packed with syrup or dry sugar or without sugar.

To Make a Syrup Pack

Mix and dissolve 2½ cups of sugar in 4 cups of water for sour cherries; or mix 1¼ cups of sugar in 4 cups of water for sweet cherries. Add 1 cup of syrup to each quart of prepared cherries.

To Make a Dry Sugar Pack

Mix ⅔ cup of dry sugar per quart of sour cherries or ½ cup of sugar per quart of sweet cherries. Mix until sugar dissolves.

To Package Syrup or Dry Pack Cherries

Fill pint or quart plastic freezer containers or tapered freezer jars. Allow ½ inch (13 mm) of headspace for dry sugar pack. Allow 1 inch (2.5 cm) of headspace for syrup pack in quarts and ½ inch (13 mm) in pints.

To Freeze without Sugar

Cherries, pitted or with pits, may be frozen without sugar, in water or unsweetened fruit juice, or dry, but the texture will be



softer when thawed. Sweet cherries may be frozen in a single layer on shallow trays before packing into containers or zip-type plastic bags to prevent them from sticking together. Individually frozen cherries can be served frozen as a snack or thawed and used as a topping for salads and desserts.

Canning Procedure

Wash jars. Prepare lids according to manufacturer's instructions. Cherries in jars may be covered with your choice of water, apple, or white grape juice, or, more commonly, a very light, light, or medium syrup. A medium syrup is suggested for sour cherries, and a very light syrup for sweet cherries. To make a very light syrup for a canner load of quarts, mix 1¼ cups of sugar in 10½ cups of water and heat to dissolve; to make a light syrup, dissolve 2¼ cups of sugar in 9 cups of water; to make a medium syrup, mix 3¾ cups of sugar in 8¾ cups of water.

To Make a Hot Pack and Raw Pack

HOT PACK. Place drained cherries in boiling syrup, juice, or water and bring to a boil. Fill clean jars with hot cherries and cooking liquid, leaving ½ inch (13 mm) of headspace.

RAW PACK. Fill jars with drained cherries and cover with your choice of boiling liquid, leaving ½ inch (13 mm) of headspace.

PROCEDURE. Remove air bubbles. Wipe the sealing edge with a clean, damp paper towel. Add lids and tighten screw bands. Process jars in a boiling water canner, atmospheric steam canner, or pressure canner.

To Process in a Boiling Water Canner

Preheat canner filled halfway with water to 180°F (82°C) for hot packs or 140°F (60°C) for raw packs. Load sealed jars into the canner rack and lower with handles, or load one jar at a time with a jar lifter onto rack in canner. Add water, if needed, to 1 inch above jars and cover. When water boils vigorously, lower

FLOATING FRUIT: To avoid floating fruit, start with firm, ripe fruit. Heat fruit before packing and use a light-to-medium syrup. Pack fruit as closely as possible without crushing. Follow directions for processing times.



heat to maintain a gentle boil and process for recommended time. After processing is complete, set canner off heat and remove canner lid. Wait 5 minutes before removing jars from the canner with a jar lifter, being careful not to tilt the jars, to a wooden cutting board or towel-lined surface.

To Process in an Atmospheric Steam Canner

Preheat the base of a steam canner that has been filled with the amount of water designated in the instruction manual that comes with the canner—usually about 2 quarts. Set the rack in the base of the canner. Heat water in the base of the canner to 180°F (82°C). As each jar is filled, place it on the canner rack, keeping the cover or lid on the atmospheric steam canner as you work. When all jars are in the canner, bring the canner to a boil over medium to medium-high heat until a steady column of steam at least 6 inches (15 cm) long escapes from the vent hole(s). Processing time begins when there is a steady column of steam 6 (15 cm) to 8 inches (20 cm) long. Slowly adjust the heat to maintain a steady column of steam throughout the processing time. Atmospheric Steam Canner instructions: When processing is complete, turn off heat. Allow the jars to sit in the covered canner for 5 minutes before removing them from the canner with a jar lifter, being careful not to tilt the jars, to a wooden cutting board or towel-lined surface.

To Process in a Pressure Canner

Place the jar rack, 2 inches (5 cm) of water, and sealed jars in canner. Fasten lid, and heat canner on high setting. After exhausting steam for 10 minutes, add weighted gauge or close petcock to pressurize the canner. Start timing the recommended process time when the desired pressure is reached. Regulate heat to maintain a uniform pressure. When processing is complete, remove canner from heat. Air-cool canner until it is fully depressurized. Then slowly remove weighted gauge or open petcock, wait 10 more minutes, and unfasten and carefully remove canner lid. Remove jars from the canner with a jar lifter, being careful not to tilt the jars, to a wooden cutting board or towel-lined surface.

After Processing

Do not retighten screw bands. Cool jars for 12 to 24 hours and remove screw bands. Check lid seals. If the center of the lid is indented, the jar is sealed. Wash, dry, label, and store sealed jars in a clean, cool, dark place. If the lid is unsealed, examine and replace jar if defective, use new lid, and reprocess as before or store in the refrigerator. Wash screw bands and store separately. Canned goods are best if consumed within a year and are safe as long as lids remain vacuum sealed.

► **Table 1.** Recommended process times in a boiling water or atmospheric steam canner at designated altitudes.

| Style of pack | Jar size | Process time (in minutes) at altitudes of | | | |
|---------------|-----------------|---|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| | | 0–1,000 ft | 1,001–3,000 ft | 3,001–6,000 ft | Above 6,000 ft |
| Hot | Pints | 15 | 20 | 20 | 25 |
| | Quarts | 20 | 25 | 30 | 35 |
| Raw | Pints or quarts | 25 | 30 | 35 | 40 |

► **Table 2.** Recommended process times in a pressure canner at designated altitudes.

| Style of pack | Jar size | Canner gauge pressure (in pounds) at altitudes of | | | | | | |
|---------------|-----------------|---|-------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------------|----------------|
| | | Process time (minutes) | Dial gauge canner | | | | Weighted gauge canner | |
| | | | 0–2,000 ft | 2,001–4,000 ft | 4,001–6,000 ft | 6,001–8,000 ft | 0–1,000 ft | Above 1,000 ft |
| Hot | Pint | 8 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 5 | 10 |
| | Quart | 10 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 5 | 10 |
| Raw | Pints or quarts | 10 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 5 | 10 |

For additional information about food preservation, visit the Penn State Extension Home Food Preservation website at extension.psu.edu/food/preservation or contact Penn State Extension in your county.

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