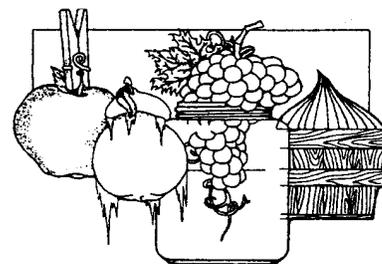


# Quality for Keeps



Information for those who produce and preserve food

## Life is a bowl of cherries

**C**herry season kicks off in June, with sour cherries available locally for just a few weeks. Sweet cherries are available all summer, but are mostly shipped from Washington, Oregon, Idaho, or Utah.

Sour varieties such as **Montmorency** are usually canned or frozen for use in pies or desserts, while sweet cherries are excellent fresh for snacking, fruit salads, or desserts. Simply wash and enjoy. Substitute fresh sweet cherries for strawberries in shortcake, or angel cake and topping. Stir fresh, sweet cherries into fruit salad, or prepare chilled cherry soup.

Common Sweet varieties include:

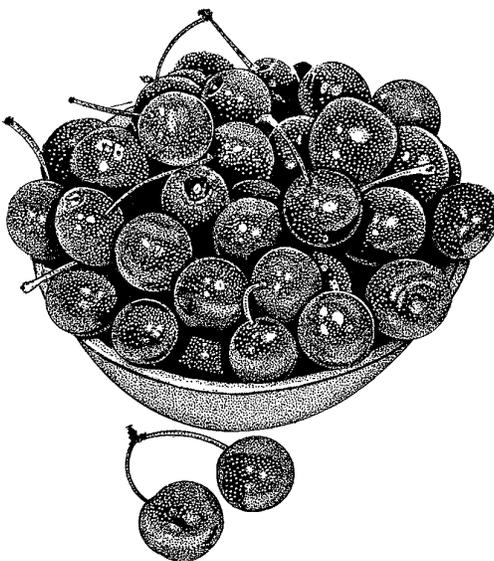
- ◆ Bing, a large, round, purple-red to black fleshed cherry.
- ◆ Lambert, a smaller, heart-shaped cherry similar to Bing.
- ◆ Rainer, a sweet cherry with yellow or pinkish skin.
- ◆ Royal Anne, a large light-skinned cherry used for maraschino cherries.

**Selection.** Buy cherries that have been kept cool and moist, as flavor and texture suffer at warm temperatures. Look for large, glossy, plump cherries that are dark colored for their variety. Sour cherries should be plump, firm, and a bright scarlet color. Avoid undersized, flabby,

bruised, or soft fruit, or fruit that is sticky with its own juices.

Look for fresh, green stems. Choose cherries with stems intact. Dark stems are a sign of old age, or poor storage conditions.

**Storage.** Refrigerate unwashed cherries loosely in plastic bags, or in shallow containers covered with plastic wrap. Cherries will keep up to a week in refrigerator, but check occasionally, and remove any that have begun to go bad.



**Freezing.** Plan to use about 1-1/4 to 1-1/2 pounds fresh cherries for 1 pint frozen cherries. Cherries are best pitted before freezing.

To pit cherries, cut fruit in half and lift out stone with tip of paring knife, or use a cherry pitter, which works like a hole punch.

● **Cherries, sour.** Select bright red, tree-ripened cherries. Wash, stem and pit.

**Syrup pack.** Pack cherries into containers and cover with 50% syrup, leave headspace, 1/2" for pints, 1" for quarts; seal and freeze. (To prepare heavy syrup, dissolve 4 cups of sugar in 4 cups warm water. Chill before using.)

**Sugar pack.** For 1 quart (1-1/3 pounds) cherries, add 3/4 cup sugar. Mix until sugar is dissolved. Pack into containers, leave 1/2" headspace for pints and quarts; seal and freeze.

● **Cherries, sweet.** Select bright, fully ripened cherries of dark colored varieties. Wash, stem and pit.

**Syrup pack.** Pack cherries into containers and cover with a 40% syrup. For a better quality product, add 1/2 teaspoon crystalline ascorbic acid to each quart of syrup, leave headspace; seal and freeze. (To prepare a 40% syrup, dissolve 2-3/4 cups sugar in 4 cups of warm water. Chill before using.)

Source: University of Missouri Extension guide: GH1502, *Quality for Keeps, Freezing Fruits*, <http://extension.missouri.edu/publications/displaypub.aspx?P=GH1502>

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## Canning whole cherries— sweet or sour.

For each 7-quart canner load, begin with an average of 17-1/2 pounds of whole cherries. To prepare a 9-pint canner load, plan to use an average of 11 pounds of whole cherries. A lug weighs 25 pounds and yields 8 quarts to 12 quarts — an average of 2-1/2 pounds per quart.

Select bright, evenly colored cherries. Look for cherries that are at the ideal stage of maturity for eating fresh or cooking. For best quality, can cherries soon after picking.

**Procedure.** Stem and wash cherries. Remove pits if desired. If pitted, place cherries in a mixture of water and ascorbic acid to prevent stem-end darkening. To can cherries with pits, prick skins on opposite sides with a clean needle to prevent splitting. Use water, apple juice, white grape juice, or syrup.

**Hot pack.** In a large saucepan, add water, juice, or syrup (1/2 cup for each quart of drained fruit) and bring to boil. Fill jars with cherries and cooking liquid; leave 1/2-inch headspace. Remove air bubbles. Wipe jar rims. Adjust lids.

At 0 to 1,000 feet in altitude, in a boiling water bath canner, process pints for 15 minutes, and quarts for 20 minutes.

At 1,001 to 3,000 feet in altitude, process pints for 20 minutes and quarts for 25 minutes in a boiling water bath canner.

**Raw pack.** Add 1/2 cup hot water, juice or syrup to each jar. Fill jars with drained cherries; shake fruit down into jars gently as you fill. Add more hot liquid; leave 1/2-inch headspace. Remove air bubbles. Wipe jar rims.

At 0 to 1,000 feet in altitude, process both pints and quarts for 25 minutes in a boiling water bath canner.

At 1,001 to 3,000 feet in altitude, process both pints and quarts for 30 minutes in a boiling water bath canner.

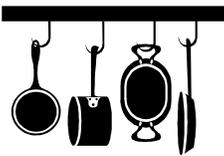
**Drying.** To dry cherries, stem, wash, drain, and pit fully ripe cherries. Cut in half, chop, or leave whole.

If cherries are left whole: Dip in boiling water 30 seconds to crack skin (10 sec. for sour cherries). If cherries are cut and pitted, no treatment is necessary.

For portable dehydrators, set temperature at 140<sup>0</sup>F for best results. Dry cherries for 24–36 hours, until product is shriveled, leathery, and dry, with no pockets of moisture.

*Source: University of Missouri Extension Guide, GH1455, Quality for Keeps: Food Preservation—Fruitful Canning, <http://extension.missouri.edu/publications/displaypub.aspx?P=GH1455>*

## THE RECIPE BOX

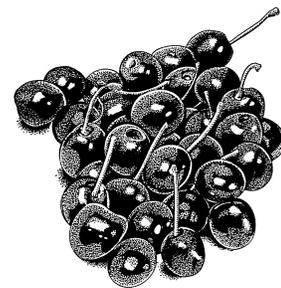


### Cherry Freezer Pie Filling

- 8 cups tart or sour cherries
- 2-1/2 cups sugar
- 5 tablespoons cornstarch

Wash cherries; drain. Pit cherries. Combine sugar and cornstarch. Stir in the cherries; let stand until the juices begin to flow; about 30 minutes. Cook over medium heat until mixture begins to thicken. Ladle into dual purpose jars, (made for canning or freezing), or plastic freezer boxes, leaving 1/2-inch headspace. Cool at room temperature, not to exceed 2 hours. Seal, label, and freeze.

*Source: Ball Blue Book 2008*



## Choose freezer packaging and containers wisely

*Proper packaging is essential to protect the flavor, color, moisture content, and nutritive value of frozen food from the dry climate of the freezer*

When choosing freezer containers, consider the type of food to be frozen and personal preference. Never freeze fruits and vegetables in containers larger than one-half gallon. Foods in larger containers freeze too slowly and result in poor quality.

To prevent freezer burn, good freezer packaging should be moisture-vapor resistant, durable, and leak proof. Freezer containers should not become brittle, nor crack at low temperatures.

In addition, suitable freezer boxes should be resistant to oil, grease or water, protect foods from absorption of off flavors or odors, and be easy to seal and label.

**Rigid Containers.** Rigid containers made of plastic or glass are suitable for all packs and are especially good for liquid packs.

Straight sides on rigid containers make the frozen food much easier to get out. Rigid containers are often re-useable and make the stacking of foods in the freezer easier.

Cartons from cottage cheese, ice cream and milk are not suitable for freezer storage, unless they are lined with a freezer bag.

Regular glass jars break easily at freezer temperatures. Expansion of the liquid could cause the jars to break at the neck. Instead, choose wide mouth dual purpose jars made for freezing and canning. These jars have been tempered to withstand extremes in temperatures. The wide mouth allows easy removal of partially thawed foods.

Covers for rigid containers should fit tightly. If they do not, reinforce the seal with freezer tape, which sticks well at freezing temperatures.

**Flexible Bags or Wrappings.** Dry packed products, with little or no liquid, may be frozen in freezer bags, plastic freezer wrap, freezer

paper, and heavy-weight aluminum foil. Freezer bags and wraps work well for foods with irregular shapes. Bags can also be used for liquid packs.

Plastic freezer bags are available in a variety of sizes. There are two types of closures. One type is twisted at the top, folded over and wrapped with twist ties, which are included in the package. The other is zipped or pressed to seal a plastic channel. Regardless of type, remove as much air as possible before closing to prevent freezer burn.

*Source: "So Easy to Preserve", 5th ed. 2006. Bulletin 989, Cooperative Extension Service, The University of Georgia, Athens. Revised by Elizabeth L. Andress, Ph.D. and Judy A. Harrison, Ph.D., Extension Foods Specialists.*



## Headspace matters when freezing food

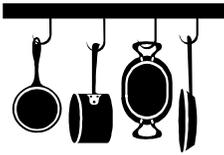
Proper headspace helps maintain the quality of frozen foods. If the head space is too large, excess air can result in freezer burn. If the headspace is too small in foods packed in liquid, the frozen liquid will expand and force off the package closure.

Type of Pack	Headspace in container with wide opening		Headspace in container with narrow opening	
	Pint	Quart	Pint	Quart
Liquid Pack*	½ inch	1 inch	¾ inch	1 ½ inch
Dry Pack**	½ inch	½ inch	½ inch	½ inch
Juices	½ inch	1 inch	1½ inch	1½ inch

\*Fruit packed in juice, sugar, syrup or water; crushed or puréed fruit.

\*\*Fruit or vegetable packed without added sugar or liquid.

## THE RECIPE BOX



### Sour Cherry Jam with powdered pectin

- 4 cups ground or finely chopped pitted cherries (about 3 pounds, or 2 quart boxes sour cherries)
- 1 package powdered pectin
- 5 cups sugar

**Yield:** About 6 half-pint jars

**Procedure:** Sterilize canning jars and prepare two-piece canning lids according to manufacturer's directions.

Prepare fruit: Sort and wash fully ripe cherries; remove any stems and pits. Grind cherries or chop fine.

To make jam: Measure prepared cherries into a kettle. Add pectin and stir well. Place on high heat, stirring constantly, bring quickly to a full boil, with bubbles over the entire surface. Add sugar, continue stirring, and heat again to a full bubbling boil. Boil hard for 1 minute, stirring constantly. Remove from heat; skim off foam.

Fill hot jars immediately into hot, sterile jars; leaving 1/4-inch headspace. Wipe rims of jars with a dampened clean paper towel; adjust two-piece metal canning lids. Process.

At altitudes of 0-1,000 feet, process half-pints or pints in a boiling water canner for 5 minutes.

At altitudes of 1,001-3,000 feet, process half-pints or pints in a boiling water canner for 10 minutes.

Source: National center for Home Food Preservation, University of Georgia, June 2005, [http://uga.edu/nchfp/how/can\\_07/cherry\\_jam\\_powder.html](http://uga.edu/nchfp/how/can_07/cherry_jam_powder.html)

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