

5 things about: Cherries

By Amy Sowder

1 Cherries are often impulse purchases and mostly available in promotable volumes in summer and early fall, so promote and merchandise aggressively. Include them in Memorial Day, Fourth of July and Labor Day promotions. Cross-merchandise them with pie fixings and highlight them as a quick snack for on-the-go families in summer. Also, push fresh cherries as a topping for those summertime ice cream sundaes.

2 Cherry varieties can be divided into sweet (dark red cherries like bings and blushing red-yellow cherries like rainiers, both better eaten fresh and out of hand) and tart (montmorency, often dried or canned and used for baking due to firm texture).

3 California, Washington and Oregon are the primary sweet cherry-producing states, accounting for almost 90% of what's produced nationwide, according to the Agricultural Marketing Resource Center. The main tart

cherry-producing state is Michigan, comprising almost 74% of tart-cherry production, according to 2022 records from the National Agricultural Statistics Service.

4 The average tart cherry tree can produce 7,000 cherries in one season, or enough for 28 cherry pies.

5 In the produce department, don't mist cherries, and keep them chilled to achieve a typical shelf life of 10-14 days. Modified-atmosphere poly liners should be slit when product is received to eliminate gas buildup and off-flavors. Open the lids of cherry boxes stored in the cooler; good air circulation will slow spoilage. Don't break cherry stems. It's normal for rainier cherries to have some skin discoloration, slight scuffing or brown spotting, and it often indicates high sugar content. *pmg*

