

# Cherries



These recommendations are appropriate for sweet or sour cherries.

## Quantity

A lug weighs 25 pounds and yields 8 to 12 quarts. An average of 17½ pounds makes a 7-quart canner load; 11 pounds makes 9 pints. An average of 1¾ pounds makes 1 pint of frozen cherries.

## Quality

Select freshly harvested cherries with a deep uniform color and ideal maturity for eating fresh. Do not delay in preserving them.

## Preparation

Stem and wash the cherries. Pit if desired. If pitted, immediately place the cherries into cold water containing 1 teaspoon of powdered ascorbic acid or six 500-mg. vitamin C tablets per gallon to prevent stem-end discoloration. Be sure to crush the vitamin C tablets. If they are preserved unpitted, prick the skins on the opposite sides with a clean needle to prevent splitting.

## Freezing

Freeze up to 2 pounds of food per cubic foot of freezer capacity per day. Cherries may be packed with syrup, dry sugar, or unsweetened.

*To make a syrup pack:* Mix and dissolve 2¾ cups of sugar in 4 cups of water for sour cherries; or mix 1¾ cups of sugar in 4 cups of water for sweet cherries. Add 1 cup of syrup to each quart of prepared cherries. Add ½ teaspoon ascorbic acid for better quality.

*For a sugar pack:* Mix ¾ cup of dry sugar per quart of sour cherries.

*For unsweetened pack:* Spread cherries on a baking sheet. Freeze until firm. Package, seal, and freeze.

To package, fill pint- or quart-freezer bags to a level of 3 to 4 inches from the tops. Squeeze out the air, leave 1-inch head space, seal, label, and freeze.

Before freezing, the bags may be inserted into reusable, rigid-plastic freezer containers for added protection against punctures and leakage.

## Canning

Wash the jars. Prepare the lids according to the manufacturer's instructions. Cherries in the jars may be covered with your choice of water, apple, or white grape juice, or more commonly with a very 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 medium syrup, mix 3¾ cups of sugar in 8¼ cups of water and heat to dissolve.

*To make a hot pack:* Place the drained cherries in boiling syrup, juice, or water and bring to a boil. Use a ½ cup of liquid for each quart of drained cherries. Fill clean jars with hot cherries and the cooking liquid, leaving ½-inch head space.

*To make a raw pack:* Fill the jars with drained cherries and cover with your choice of boiling liquid, leaving ½-inch head space.

## Nutrition per ½ -cup serving

	In syrup		In sugar	
	Sour cherries	Sweet cherries	Sour cherries	Sweet cherries
Calories	87.0	76.0	103.0	84.0
Carbohydrate	0.2 g	0.7 g	0.2 g	0.7 g
Fat	22.0 g	18.0 g	26.0 g	20.0 g
Vitamin C	8.0 mg	5.0 mg	8.0 mg	5.0 mg
Dietary fiber	0.9 g	0.8 g	0.9 g	0.8 g
Sodium	2.5 mg	0.0 mg	2.5 mg	0.0 mg

Wipe the jar sealing edges with a clean, damp paper towel. Add the lids and tighten the screw bands. You may process the jars in a boiling-water or pressure canner.

*To process in a boiling-water canner:* Preheat the canner, filled halfway with water, to 180° F for hot packs or 140° F for raw packs. Load the sealed jars into the canner rack and lower with the handles; or, with a jar lifter, load one jar at a time onto the rack in the canner.

Add water, if needed, to a level of 1 inch above the jars and add the lid. When the water boils vigorously, reduce heat to maintain a gentle boil and process for the recommended time according to the table below.

### Recommended process times in a boiling-water canner

Processing time in minutes at different altitudes (in feet)				
Style of pack	Jar size	0-1,000	1,001-3,000	3,001-6,000
<b>Hot</b>	Pints	15	20	20
	Quarts	20	25	30
<b>Raw</b>	Pints or Quarts	25	30	35

*To process in a pressure canner:* Place the jar rack, 2 inches of water, and the closed jars in the canner. Fasten the canner lid, and heat the canner on a high setting. After exhausting the steam for 10 minutes, add the weighted gauge or close the petcock to pressurize the canner. Start timing the recommended process time when the desired pressure is reached. Regulate the heat to maintain a uniform pressure. When processing is completed, remove the canner from the heat. Air-cool the canner until it is fully depressurized. Then slowly remove the weighted gauge or open the petcock, wait 2 more minutes, and unfasten and carefully remove the canner lid.

## Cherry Pie Filling

### General

This fruit filling is an excellent and safe product. Each canned quart makes one 8-inch to 9-inch pie. Fillings may be used as toppings on desserts or pastries. Clear Jel is a starch modified to produce excellent sauce consistency even after fillings are canned and baked. Other available household starches break down, causing a runny sauce consistency when they are used in pie fillings. Clear Jel is available in bulk food stores or on the Internet.

### Recommended process times in a pressure canner

Canner gauge pressure for different altitudes (in feet)						
Style of pack	Jar size	Process time (min.)	Dial gauge (lbs.)		Weighted gauge (lbs.)	
			0-2,000	2,001-4,000	0-1,000	Above 1,000
<b>Hot</b>	Pints	8	6	7	5	10
	Quarts	10	6	7	5	10
<b>Raw</b>	Pints or quarts	10	6	7	5	10

### Nutrition per ½-cup serving

	In water	In apple juice	In very light syrup	In medium syrup
<b>Calories</b>	102.0	125.0	119.0	154.0
<b>Carbohydrate</b>	24.0 g	29.0 g	28.0 g	37.0 g
<b>Fat</b>	1.4 g	1.4 g	1.4 g	1.4 g
<b>Vitamin C</b>	10.0 mg	10.0 mg	10.0 mg	10.0 mg
<b>Dietary fiber</b>	1.6 g	1.7 g	1.6 g	1.6 g
<b>Sodium</b>	0.0 mg	1.5 mg	0.0 mg	0.0 mg

*Note:* Figures are for sweet cherries. If you use sour cherries, the calories are 30 less, carbohydrate is 6 grams less, and fat is 1 gram less for each of the above. Fiber is the same, and vitamin C and sodium are 4 milligrams more.

Because the variety of the fruit may alter the flavor of the fruit pie, you should first make a single quart, make a pie, and serve it. Then adjust the sugar and spices in the recipe to suit your personal preference. The amount of lemon juice should not be altered, because it aids in ensuring the safety and storage stability of the fillings. If the filling is too tart, add more sugar to taste.

When using frozen cherries, select unsweetened fruit. If sugar has been added, rinse it off while fruit is frozen. Collect, measure, and use juice from thawing fruit to partially replace the water specified in the recipe and only ¼ cup Clear Jel per quart, or 1¾ cups for 7 quarts.

### Ingredients

Ingredient	Quantities of ingredients needed for:	
	1 quart filling	7 quarts filling
Fresh or thawed sour cherries	3½ cups	6 quarts
Granulated sugar	1 cup	7 cups
Clear Jel	¼ cup + 1 tbsp.	1¾ cups
Cold water	1½ cups	9½ cups
Bottled lemon juice	1 tbsp. + 1 tsp.	½ cup
Cinnamon (optional)	⅛ tsp.	1 tsp.
Almond extract (optional)	¼ tsp.	2 tsp.
Red food coloring (optional)	6 drops	¼ tsp.

### Quality

Select very ripe, firm, tart cherries.

### Procedure

Rinse and pit the cherries, and hold them in cold water. To prevent stem-end browning, hold the pitted cherries in water containing 1 teaspoon of ascorbic acid crystals, or six 500-mg vitamin C tablets in 1 gallon of water. Be sure to crush the tablets.

For fresh fruit, place 6 cups at a time in 1 gallon of boiling water. Boil each batch 1 minute after the water returns to a boil. Drain, but keep the heated fruit in a covered bowl or pot. Combine the sugar and Clear Jel in a large saucepan. Add the water and, if desired, the cinnamon, food coloring, and almond extract. Stir the mixture and cook over medium-high heat until the mixture thickens and begins to bubble.

Add the lemon juice and boil 1 minute, stirring constantly. Fold in the drained cherries; fill the jars immediately with the mixture, leaving 1-inch head space; and process without delay.

To process in a boiling-water canner, preheat the canner, half-filled with water, to 180° F. Load the sealed jars into the canner rack and lower with the handles. Or with a jar lifter, load one jar at a time onto the rack in the canner. Add water, if needed, to a level of 1 inch above the jars, and cover. When the water boils vigorously, reduce the heat to maintain a gentle boil and process for the recommended time: For pints or quarts, 30 minutes at altitudes of 0 to 1,000 feet; 35 minutes at altitudes of 1,001 to 3,000 feet; and 40 minutes at altitudes of 3,001 to 6,000 feet.

### Nutrition

	Quantities of ingredients needed for:		
	1 quart filling	½ cup filling	⅓ double-crust pie
<b>Calories</b>	1201.0	150.0	361.0
<b>Carbohydrate</b>	309.0 g	39.0 g	58.0 g
<b>Fat</b>	1.7 g	0.2 g	14.0 g
<b>Vitamin C</b>	61.0 mg	8.0 g	8.0 g
<b>Dietary fiber</b>	52.0 g	6.5 g	7.0 g
<b>Sodium</b>	118.0 mg	15.0 mg	231.0 mg

### Sour Cherry Jelly

*Yield:* 7 half pints

3½ cups prepared juice (about 4½ pounds)

1 tbsp lemon juice

7 cups sugar

2 pouches liquid pectin

Remove stems and pits. Finely chop. Add ½ cup water; simmer 10 minutes, covered, stirring occasionally. Place prepared fruit in dampened jelly bag or several layers of dampened cheesecloth. Let juice drip, undisturbed, for at least 2 hours or overnight. *Note:* Squeezing the jelly bag may cause jelly to be cloudy. Measure juice and ingredients. If you need more juice, simply add water to fruit pulp and extract. Combine juice with lemon juice and sugar in a 6- or 8-quart saucepan. Add up to ½ teaspoon butter or margarine to reduce foaming, if desired. Bring mixture to a full rolling boil that cannot be stirred down, over high heat, stirring frequently. Add liquid pectin, immediately squeezing entire contents from pouches. Continue hard boil for 1 minute,

stirring constantly. Remove from heat. Skim foam if necessary. Ladle hot jelly into hot jars, one at a time, leaving ¼ inch headspace. Clean rim and threads of jars using a clean, damp cloth to remove any residue. Apply lids and rings and adjust until fit is fingertip tight. Place jars in boiling water bath canner. Be sure water covers tops of jars 1 to 2 inches. Bring to a gentle boil. Process jelly for 10 minutes for altitude 0 to 1,000 feet; 15 minutes for altitude 1,001 to 3,000 feet; and 20 minutes for altitude 3,001 to 6,000 feet.

### After Processing

Remove jars from canner and set upright on a towel to cool, undisturbed, for 12 to 24 hours. Bands should not be retightened as this may interfere with the sealing process. After cooling, test lids by pressing the center of each lid. If a lid does not flex up and down, it is sealed. If a lid is not sealed, store the jelly in the refrigerator immediately for up to 3 weeks or reprocess for the full length of time with a new lid.

#### Nutrition per 1 tablespoon

Calories	29.92
Carbohydrate	7.57 g
Fat	0.0 g
Vit C	0.25 mg
Dietary fiber	0.12 g
Sodium	1.8 mg

### Cherry Jam

*Yield:* 8 half-pints

1 quart chopped and pitted sweet or sour cherries  
6¼ cups sugar

2 tablespoons lemon juice (use only with sweet cherries)

2 pouches liquid pectin

Combine cherries, sugar, and lemon juice (if needed) in a large saucepot. Bring to a boil, stirring until sugar dissolves. Stir in liquid pectin. Return to a rolling boil. Boil hard 1 minute, stirring constantly. Remove from heat. Skim foam if necessary. Ladle hot jam into hot jars, leaving ¼-inch headspace. Adjust two-piece lids. Process in a boiling-water canner for 10 minutes at altitude 1 to 1,000 feet; 15 minutes at altitude 1,001 to 3,000 feet; or 20 minutes at altitude 3,001 to 6,000 feet.

#### Nutrition per 1 tablespoon

Calories	44
Carbohydrate	11.39 g
Fat	0.0 g
Vit C	0.11 mg
Dietary Fiber	0.08 g
Sodium	0.94 mg

#### Revised by Karen Blakeslee, M.S., Extension Associate, Food Science

Adapted from *Preserving Cherries* by Karen P. Penner, Ph.D., Foods and Nutrition, and Jeanne Dray, Extension Assistant, Foods and Nutrition, April 1995; *Complete Guide to Home Canning*, USDA AIB No. 539, 2009; and *So Easy to Preserve*, 5th ed., The University of Georgia Cooperative Extension Service.

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