



Season spotlight



Cherries

Seriously, is there anyone who doesn't like cherries? We hope not, because this season is promising a bumper crop. Thanks to great winter weather and good soil conditions, according to Cherry Growers Australia the industry is expecting around 13,000 tonnes of fruit. It's a short and sweet season though, running from November to February. So get chomping.

History

People have enjoyed wild cherries since prehistoric times, with cherry seeds discovered in Stone Age caves. Cherries were first cultivated in Asia Minor and subsequently discovered by the Romans in 72BC. Australia has been cultivating cherries since the late nineteenth century.

Vitamins plus

Cherries boast the 'superfood' label: they're packed full of antioxidants and other phytonutrients that offer protection against heart disease and ease arthritis pain. They're a good source of vitamin C too, and are great for gout.

Buy

Check out markets and good providers for the best quality cherries, and choose cherries that are dark mahogany in colour. While most

of our country's cherries are grown in the cooler climates over east, Western Australia has several cherry farms, mainly in the South West, or check out the Manjimup Cherry Festival in December.

Types of cherries

Most of the cherries we enjoy are sweet cherries, but sour cherries such as the Morello are also harvested and used in cooking. All up, there are around fifty cherry varieties grown locally, including a white cherry that is often available at the Canning Vale markets. According to local cherry farmer Gary Fergusson, we have lots of varieties in Western Australia, but they're not easy to distinguish. "The best time for cherries is from mid to the end of December, when the local cherries are available," says Gary. "That's when they're the sweetest, and the best quality."



Cherry smoothie

Serves one

- 1 cup fresh cherries, pitted
- 1 cup low fat milk/soy milk
- 3 tspn vanilla low-fat yoghurt
- ¼ tspn cinnamon powder
- 1 tspn vanilla essence
- 1 tspn linseed, sunflower & almond (LSA) meal

Blend ingredients together with a few ice cubes. This drink is high in fibre, carbohydrates, protein and vitamins, and a great way to start the day.