Cherries

Recommended Varieties
All sweet or sour cherries can be used.

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 deep, uniform color and ideal maturity for eating fresh. Don’t delay preserving them, with or without seeds.

Preparation
Stem and wash. Pit if desired. If pitted, immediately place cherries into cold water containing 1 teaspoon of powdered ascorbic acid or six 500-milligram vitamin C tablets per gallon 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.

TO MAKE SYRUP PACK
Mix and dissolve 2¼ 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 PACK
Mix ¾ cup of dry sugar per quart of sour cherries or ½ cup of sugar per quart of sweet cherries.

To package, fill pint or quart freezer bags to 3–4 inches from their tops. Squeeze out air, seal, label, and freeze. Before freezing, bags may be inserted into reusable, rigid plastic freezer containers for added protection against punctures and leakage. If using rigid containers, allow ½-inch headspace for dry sugar pack and 1-inch headspace for syrup pack in quarts.

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, with 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; or mix and dissolve 2¼ cups of sugar in 9 cups of water to make a light syrup; or 3¼ cups of sugar in 8¼ cups of water to make a medium syrup.

TO MAKE A 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 headspace.

TO MAKE A RAW PACK
Fill jars with drained cherries and cover with your choice of boiling liquid, leaving

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Table 1. Recommended process times in a boiling water canner at designated altitudes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STYLE OF PACK</th>
<th>JAR SIZE</th>
<th>0–1,000 FT (MIN)</th>
<th>1,001–3,000 FT (MIN)</th>
<th>3,001–6,000 FT (MIN)</th>
<th>ABOVE 6,000 FT (MIN)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hot</td>
<td>Pints</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hot</td>
<td>Quarts</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raw</td>
<td>Pints or quarts</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STYLE OF PACK</th>
<th>JAR SIZE</th>
<th>DIAL GAUGE CANNER</th>
<th>WEIGHTED GAUGE CANNER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Raw or hot</td>
<td>Pint or quart</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>6</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

½-inch headspace. Remove air bubbles. Wipe the sealing edge with a clean, damp paper towel. Add lids and tighten screw bands. You may process jars in a boiling water or pressure canner.

TO PROCESS IN A BOILING WATER CANNER
Preheat canner filled halfway with water to 180°F for hot packs or 140°F 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 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. Finish cooling as for pressure canning in next column.

TO PROCESS IN A PRESSURE CANNER
Place the jar rack, 2 inches of water, and sealed jars in canner. Fasten lids, 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 weighed gauge or open petcock, wait 10 more minutes, and unfasten and carefully remove canner lid.

After processing is complete, remove jars from canner with jar lifter and place on a towel or rack. Do not retighten screw bands. Air-cool jars for 12 to 24 hours. Remove screw bands and check lid seals. If the center of the lid is indented, wash, dry, label, and store jar in a clean, cool, dark place. If lid is unsealed, examine and replace jar if defective, use new lid, and reprocess as before. Wash bands and store separately. Cherries are best if consumed within one year and are safe as long as lids remain vacuum sealed.

For additional information about food preservation, visit the Penn State Food Safety Web site at foodsafety.cas.psu.edu and select the Home Food Preservation Web site, or contact Penn State Cooperative Extension in your county.

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