

LET'S PRESERVE

Cherries

Recommended Varieties

All sweet or sour cherries can be used.

Quantity

An average of 17½ pounds makes a 7-quart canner load; 11 pounds makes 9 pints. An average of 1⅔ pounds makes 1 pint of frozen cherries.

Quality

Select freshly harvested cherries with deep, uniform color and ideal maturity for eating fresh. Cherries should be firm in texture and have a snap in the skin with each bite. Overripe cherries are dull and have a dried stem. Don't delay preserving them.

Preparation

Stem and wash. Pit if desired. If pitted, immediately place cherries into a solution containing 1 teaspoon of powdered ascorbic acid or six finely crushed 500-milligram vitamin C tablets per gallon of cold water 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 or without sugar.

To Make a Syrup Pack

Mix and dissolve 2½ 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 Sugar Pack

Mix ⅔ cup of dry sugar per quart of sour cherries or ½ cup of sugar per quart of sweet cherries. Mix until sugar dissolves.

To Package Syrup or Dry Pack Cherries

Fill pint or quart plastic freezer containers or tapered freezer jars. Allow ½ inch of headspace for dry sugar pack. Allow 1 inch of headspace for syrup pack in quarts and ½ inch in pints.

To Freeze without Sugar

Cherries, pitted or with pits, may be frozen without sugar, in water or unsweetened fruit juice, or dry, but the texture will be softer when thawed. Sweet cherries may be frozen in a single layer on shallow trays before packing into containers or zip-type plastic bags to prevent them from sticking together. Individually frozen cherries can be served frozen as a snack or thawed and used as a topping for salads and desserts.



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, 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; to make a light syrup, dissolve 2¼ cups of sugar in 9 cups of water; to make a medium syrup, mix 3¾ cups of sugar in 8¼ cups of water.

To Make a Hot Pack and Raw Pack

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 of headspace.

RAW PACK. Fill jars with drained cherries and cover with your choice of boiling liquid, leaving ½ inch of headspace.

PROCEDURE. Remove air bubbles. Wipe the sealing edge with a clean, damp paper towel. Add lids and tighten screw bands. Process jars in a boiling water canner, atmospheric steam canner, 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 and placing 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

FLOATING FRUIT: To avoid floating fruit, start with firm, ripe fruit. Heat fruit before packing and use a light to medium syrup. Pack fruit as closely as possible without crushing. Follow directions for processing times.



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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.

To Process in an Atmospheric Steam Canner

Preheat the base of a steam canner that has been filled with the amount of water designated in the instruction manual that comes with the canner—usually about 2 quarts. Set the rack in the base of the canner. Heat water in the base of the canner to 180°F. As each jar is filled, place it on the canner rack, keeping the cover or lid on the atmospheric steam canner as you work. When all jars are in the canner, bring the canner to a boil over medium to medium-high heat until a steady column of steam at least 6 inches long escapes from the vent hole(s). Processing time begins when there is a steady column of steam 6 to 8 inches long. Slowly adjust the heat to maintain a steady column of steam throughout the processing time. When processing is complete, remove the canner lid or cover. Allow the jars to sit in

the canner for 5 minutes before removing them from the canner with a jar lifter to a towel-covered counter. Do not retighten screw bands. Cool, inspect, label, and store jars as described above in boiling water canner instructions.

To Process in a Pressure Canner

Place the jar rack, 2 inches of water, and sealed jars in canner. Fasten lid, 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. Remove jars from canner with jar lifter and place on a towel or rack. Finish cooling and storing as directed in processing in a boiling water canner above.

► **Table 1.** Recommended process times in a boiling water or atmospheric steam canner at designated altitudes.

		Process time (in minutes) at altitudes of			
Style of pack	Jar size	0–1,000 ft	1,001–3,000 ft	3,001–6,000 ft	Above 6,000 ft
Hot	Pints	15	20	20	25
	Quarts	20	25	30	35
Raw	Pints or quarts	25	30	35	40

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

		Canner gauge pressure (in pounds) at altitudes of						
		Dial gauge canner					Weighted gauge canner	
Style of pack	Jar size	Process time (minutes)	0–2,000 ft	2,001–4,000 ft	4,001–6,000 ft	6,001–8,000 ft	0–1,000 ft	Above 1,000 ft
Hot	Pint	8	6	7	8	9	5	10
	Quart	10	6	7	8	9	5	10
Raw	Pints or quarts	10	6	7	8	9	5	10

For additional information about food preservation, visit the Penn State Extension Home Food Preservation website at extension.psu.edu/food/preservation or contact Penn State Extension in your county.

Prepared by Martha Zepp, extension project assistant; Andy Hirneisen, senior food safety educator; and Luke LaBorde, professor of food science.

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