



## **Upcoming Washington Cherry Crop Expected To Be Large and Delicious**

*Rainier Fruit Company foresees a bountiful cherry season for consumers*

SELAH, WA (May 22, 2014) — Cherry lovers everywhere are in for a treat this summer when the Pacific Northwest's bountiful crop begins hitting the stores in early June, the earliest start of a season in three years. Barring unforeseen close-to-harvest rains or chilly weather, this year's Northwest cherries are anticipated to be plentiful, large-sized and extraordinarily flavorful.

"Northwest cherries are by far the best tasting and best quality fruit available and consumers will not be disappointed this year. The growing season has been great, getting off to an early start with weather conditions that have been next to perfect for growing beautiful, delicious cherries in abundant quantity for a long-lasting harvest in 2014," says Suzanne Wolter, spokesperson for Rainier Fruit.

The California cherry-growing season, by contrast, appears light this year—down by as much as a third from last year—because of the state's inclement weather. A smaller crop from California will likely result in strong early season demand the first few weeks of the Washington harvest, a crop that typically arrives after the California cherries are in stores.

Rainier Fruit Company grows five varieties of sweet dark cherries and the light colored Rainier (that have a short season, available primarily during the month of July). All the Northwest cherries are harvested at various times during the summer growing season. The company also grows three varieties as "certified organic", Chelan, Bing and Rainier cherries. Rainier Fruit has earned a reputation in the industry for unparalleled quality and delivery of this highly volatile tree fruit that requires delicate handling and care when bringing it to market.

### **Handled and Packed with Special Care**

To provide consumers with large volumes of top-quality, fresh and delicious cherries, Rainier Fruit Company takes these exceptional measures:

- Remove field heat from cherries at harvest to ensure shelf life
- Maintain cold chain from storage through delivery to reduce spoilage from heat
- Pack cherries in state-of-the-art facilities, and limit handling while maintaining the

- cold chain
- Train staff in the latest techniques in food safety and handling
- Facilitate independent, third-party inspections, evaluations and grading of the company's food safety programs and production facilities

### **Uniquely Delicious—and Super-Nutritious**

Sweet cherries are not only a one-of-a-kind eating experience, but they're also packed with healthful benefits, according to the American Dietetic Association. Cherries are filled with antioxidants, high in fiber and vitamin C; they're low in calories and are fat, sodium- and cholesterol-free. They are low on the glycemic index, and just 20 cherries provided 25 mg of anthocyanins. According to the results of a 2013 study release by researchers at the USDA-Agricultural Research Service Western Human Nutrition Research Center, consuming sweet cherries may reduce risk or modify the severity of inflammatory diseases such as arthritis, diabetes, CVD, blood pressure and cancer.

#### A one-cup serving size of sweet cherries contains approximately:

90 calories

0g fat

0g cholesterol

0g sodium

300 mg potassium

22g carbohydrate

3g of dietary fiber

19g sugar

Glycemic index: 22 (considerably lower than most other fruits)

Cherries are one of the few truly seasonal commodities. Consumers love to eat them as a snack and enjoy them in a variety of recipes. Here is a recipe that is certain to change up your next taco.



#### **Fish Tacos with Cherry Salsa**

Quick Cherry Salsa (recipe below)

1 pound white fish fillets (such as halibut, cod or tilapia)

2 tablespoons flour

½ teaspoon salt

1/8 teaspoon ground black pepper

1 tablespoon olive oil

1 cup pitted and halved Northwest fresh sweet cherries

¼ cup *each* diagonally sliced green onion and chopped cilantro

1 tablespoon chopped jalapeno pepper\*

8 corn tortillas

2 cups shredded lettuce

1 cup diced avocados

Prepare Quick Cherry Salsa. Cut fish into 3/4-inch cubes. Combine flour, salt and pepper. Sprinkle seasoned flour over fish cubes and toss to coat pieces. Heat olive oil in a nonstick pan over medium-high heat and sauté fish until lightly browned and cooked. Add cherries, green onion, cilantro and jalapeno pepper; sauté about 1

minute or until cherries are thoroughly heated. If desired, wrap tortillas in microwave-safe plastic wrap and microwave at HIGH 1 to 1½ minutes. Divide fish and cherry mixture in 8 and spoon each portion to one side of each tortilla, top with 1/4 cup lettuce and 2 tablespoons diced avocados. Fold tortilla in half or roll into cone shape. Serve with Quick Cherry Salsa. Makes 4 servings.

**Quick Cherry Salsa:** Combine 1 cup prepared salsa with 1 cup chopped cherries, 1/4 cup chopped sweet onion and 1 to 2 tablespoons finely chopped jalapeno pepper\*; mix thoroughly. Let stand at least 1 hour to allow flavors to blend. Makes 2 cups.

*Nutritional Analysis Per Serving:* 430 Cal., 18 g fat (36% Cal. from fat), 30 g pro., 40 g carb., 36 mg chol., 6 g fiber, 496 mg sodium.

\* For a milder sauce, substitute Anaheim chili peppers



Start looking for sweet Washington cherries at your local grocer in early June in exceptional new packaging that easily identifies the fruit. Don't hesitate to indulge in this luscious, healthy snack during its relatively brief growing season—this summer's crop is expected to be one of the best in years!

For more information about Rainier Fruit visit [www.rainierfruit.com](http://www.rainierfruit.com).

### **About Rainier Fruit Company**

Rainier Fruit Company is one of the largest growers of fresh apples, pears, cherries and blueberries in the United States. The company dates back to 1888 when the founders moved to Washington from Virginia's Shenandoah Valley and started growing apples on a small parcel in Selah. Today, under the careful stewardship of highly trained horticulturists, the company continues to artfully select premier orchard sites and choose the most environmentally sustainable practices in the industry to maintain the highest-quality standards. Rainier Fruit Company's orchards benefit from Central Washington's rich, volcanic soil, snow-fed irrigation supply and long growing season to produce juicy, flavorful fruit demanded by consumers around the world. For more information, visit [www.rainierfruit.com](http://www.rainierfruit.com).

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