



Fruit Share

2010 · Cherries



What It Takes

If you ask Apple Otte what's the most rewarding part of her job, she'll be frank, and tell you that she and her husband, George, have starkly different answers to that questions. For George, it's simple. He enjoys watching folks enjoy the cherries yielded from the Otte's central Washington organic farm. But for Apple – the self professed “more philosophical” spouse – she relishes the intrinsic value of being part of something bigger. Being part of a movement, a lifestyle, and, of course, being a part of some of the healthiest, tastiest food grown today.

The Otte's are old pros – they've been growing organically for over 30 years. But in 1997, they purchased their current orchard and, considering they closed the deal in July, the land came with crops planted, and yes, pesticides present. The following years were trying, to say the least. As the Otte's transitioned the land back to its natural, organic state, they endured tough harvests, a steep learning curve and were, as Apple puts it, “paying for the privilege of being here and working all year for free.”

Since then, though, things have gotten markedly brighter in the Okanogan Valley. The farm functions smoothly, around 40 seasonal workers find safe, happy, employment, and the Ottes have time to give thanks – not the least of which to the beneficial insects that keep pesky cherry aphids on their toes. But no one's gotten complacent, because come mid-June, cherry harvest begins and, as Apple aptly puts it, “it's crazy.” Days start at 4:30 a.m. and don't end till around 9 p.m., but with the help of the workers, three grown children plus their significant others, it's much more than simply a busy farm. “It's a place where everyone can come and be part of something,” offers Apple. Odds are you can't make it up to the Otte's orchard, but you can be part of it all by supporting and enjoying this season's delicious, fresh cherries.



Color Picking Process

The Ottes cherry orchard is a mere 3.5 acres large. But, with its pedestrian size, comes the opportunity for some extra T.L.C. The absence of a huge, indifferent fruit harvester allows the Ottes and their workers to sweep through the rows of cherries - sometimes on upwards of four separate occasions - to hand select the cherries at their peak level of ripeness. It may take extra time, but it assures that the cherries you order are neither wind damaged, unripened, or anything but perfect.

Benefits

Cherries have long been considered healthy. But recently, a study conducted by the University of Michigan shed even more light on to just how healthy they truly are. Here's what they found:

- High levels of antioxidants
- Great source of vitamin A
- Rich in fiber
- Cherry-rich diets can lower total cholesterol and reduce triglycerides (fatty acids)

Uses

Although they're great as a snack on their own, these cherries are as versatile as they are wholesome. Try them ...



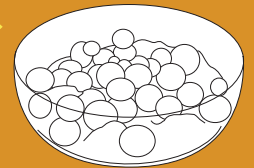
Baking

Mix them in with recipes for muffins, scones, pies, and crisps.



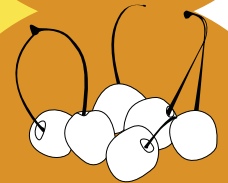
In Smoothies

Blend them with other fruits, ice, and frozen yogurt.



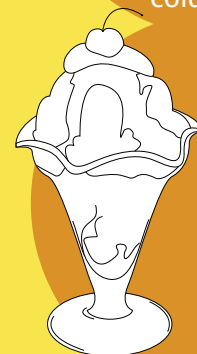
As Toppings

Sprinkle them on cereals and yogurts.



When Frozen

It'll preserve leftover berries and makes a delicious cold snack.



On Ice Cream

And, of course, as the perfect topper to your favorite ice cream dish.

Cherry Buttermilk Scones

Ingredients

- 2 1/4 cups all-purpose flour
- 1/2 cup oatmeal
- 1/3 cup sugar + 1 tablespoon sugar, divided
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1/2 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 cup cold unsalted butter, cut into small pieces
- 3/4 cup dried tart cherries, finely chopped
- 1/2 cup low-fat buttermilk
- 3 large eggs, divided (2 for scone batter; 1 for egg wash)
- Additional flour for cutting scones, etc.

Directions

Combine dry ingredients in a mixing bowl. Cut in butter with a pastry blender until the mixture resembles coarse meal. Stir in the dried cherries. In another bowl, whisk together the buttermilk and two of the eggs. Add liquid mixture to dry mixture, stirring just until moist (dough will be soft and sticky). Allow dough to rest for 10 minutes. Preheat oven to 400 degrees Fahrenheit. Prepare egg wash. Flour surface for forming scones. Turn out dough and knead two to three times. Dough will be very soft. Divide dough in half. Roll each piece of dough into a 5-inch circle about 3/4 inch thick. Using a sharp knife, cut each round into 8 pie-shaped wedges. Using a metal spatula, carefully transfer wedges onto a cookie sheet, arranging so that wedges are not touching. They should be at least 1 1/2 inches apart. In a small bowl, whisk remaining egg with 1 tablespoon of water to make an egg wash. Brush a very light coat of egg wash onto the top of each scone; sprinkle tops of scones with remaining tablespoon of sugar, and bake for about 13 minutes, or until the tops are lightly browned and the insides are fully baked. The scones will be firm to the touch. Serve warm.

Makes 16 scones

(Courtesy: Choosecherries.com)

