



By Peggy Crum, MA, RD, Health4U Nutritionist

Excitement is building in northern Michigan—it's harvest time in the Cherry Capital of the World. The five counties surrounding Traverse City produce about 75 percent of the tart or sour cherries grown in the United States. 2016 is on track to be a banner year!

The region's affinity for the cherry comes naturally. Cherry trees don't like wet feet—they do best in sandy soils planted high on rolling hills. Add the breezes off Lake Michigan to provide a temperate climate and you have perfect conditions for bumper cherry crops year after year. That's not to say tart cherries are easy to grow. They're not. Cherries require vigilance of the growers to keep pests and diseases at bay.

Tart cherries are in-season from the end of June through mid-July. But they're too delicate to ship fresh. You can buy fresh tart cherries for a very brief time if you may happen upon a roadside stand while driving around the northwest part of Michigan's Lower Peninsula. Use them quickly as they won't keep more than a day or two. Ninety-nine percent of tart cherries are processed, mostly frozen. This means that it's tart cherry season all year round!

The pucker power of tart cherries pairs well in dishes with a sweet element such as cobbler, pie, smoothies, preserves, and sweet potatoes. Did I mention pie? If ever there was a classic American dessert, it would have to be apple cherry pie.

Tart cherries are a dried fruit, too. Featured in February 2013 Chef Kurt shared his fabulous recipe for [Dried Cherry Granola Bars](#). Additionally, dried cherries are great in sauces and salads and for snacking out-of-hand.

The remainder of the tart cherry crop is pressed for juice concentrate and wine. If you have never experienced cherry wine, it's light and sweet and the prettiest of reds—a dessert unto itself. Cheers to cherries!

RECIPE for health

JULY 2016

featured food:

TART CHERRIES

Tart Cherry Gastrique

By Corporate Chef Kurt Kwiatkowski, Residential Dining Services

Serves 6-8

- 2 T. olive oil
- ¼ c. shallots, julienned
- 2 cloves of garlic, minced
- ½ c. red wine
- 2 c. frozen tart cherries, pitted
- ¾ c. red wine vinegar
- ½ c. sugar
- 1 star anise
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 t. orange zest
- 3 T. butter
- Salt and pepper to taste

Heat oil over medium heat in a sauce pan. Add shallots and sauté for 4 minutes. Add garlic and sauté for an additional minute.

Deglaze pan with wine, then add cherries, vinegar, sugar, star anise, and bay leaf. Bring to a simmer and let the sauce reduce for 12 to 15 minutes. To test the reduction, dip the back of a spoon in the sauce and drag your finger across it—if a line remains where you swiped your finger, the sauce is done.

Remove from heat. Add zest and butter. Taste and add salt and pepper as needed.

Delicious with beef, chicken, pork, duck, lamb, and flavorful cheeses. Also pairs nicely with vegetables such as roasted winter squash, pumpkin, and sweet potatoes.

A gastrique is a thick sweet-and-sour sauce often served with fatty meats. The origin of the name is curious as the term refers to stomach troubles. Perhaps it was thought that the vinegar would settle the tummy when eating a rich meal!

- Join us in person at Brody Square Demo Kitchen. Sign-up at health4u@msu.edu.
- Watch online: alumni.msu.edu/livestream.