



All About Michigan

Michigan's Cherries!

Many centuries ago, European and Asian peoples enjoyed eating cherries. They are believed to have come from China around 4000 B.C. Cherries were brought to America by early settlers in the 1600s. Cherry trees, in fact, were part of the gardens of French settlers when they established Detroit.

In Michigan, Peter Dougherty, a Presbyterian missionary, planted the first cherry orchard in 1852 in the Grand Traverse Bay area on Old Mission Peninsula. These trees produced well and soon other orchards were planted all over Northern Michigan. Grand Traverse area possesses the conditions that cherries need to grow to their full potential. Orchards there are usually planted on rolling hills and sandy soil where there is water drainage and air flow.

The first cherry processing facility was built just south of Traverse City called the Traverse City Canning Company. Soon cherries were being shipped all over the country. Today, Traverse City is known nationally as the "Cherry Capital of the World". In fact, the National Cherry Festival is held there each year which began in 1924. This year it's July 2nd thru 9th when the sweet and tart cherries begin to ripen.

The five counties around Traverse City produce 40% of the an-



nual tart cherry crop in the United States. Cherries used to be picked by hand, but now a mechanical shaker which looks like an upside down umbrella is used. Today most sweet cherries are still picked by hand.

- The major variety of tart cherry grown in the United States is the Montmorency. It has been cultivated in the United States for more than a century because the fruit is excellent for pies, preserves, jellies, juice and other products.

- Tart cherries have high levels of antioxidants when compared to other fruits. Some studies show that eating about 20 cherries a day could reduce inflammatory pain and headache pain among many other uses.

- The United States produces more than 650 million pounds of tart and sweet cherries. Michigan grows about 75 percent of the U.S. crop of tart cherries and about 20 percent of the U.S. crop of sweet cherries.

- It takes about 250 cherries to make a cherry pie.

- The most famous sweet cherry variety is the Bing cherry. However, there are more than 1,000 varieties of sweet cherries. Bing cherries are a dark red/burgundy color. There also are light sweet cherry varieties, such as Rainier and Queen Anne.

