



- Advertisement -

Cherries primed to capitalize on pent-up demand

March 24, 2021

Cherry season is fast approaching and Stemilt is prepping retailers with a special edition of Fast Facts: The Cast. Brianna Shales, Stemilt marketing director, sits down with Katie Harmon, communications manager, to give an overview of Nielsen's cherry performance data from May 9 to Sept. 12, 2020, compared to the same timeframe in 2019 and what opportunities retailers can look for in 2021.

"Every cherry season is memorable, and the 2020 season was no exception," said Shales. "Across the U.S., cherries made up 3.4 percent of the total produce dollars from May to September with the Midwest and Northeast regions closer to 4 percent. These numbers are quite impressive, especially since we were in the midst of a pandemic."

Compared to 2019, California cherry crop volumes were up in 2020, but still considered a small crop and the Northwest had a small crop as well, driving lower than normal June shipments. This forced a demand-exceeded-supply situation in the days leading to the July Fourth holiday, so retailers had to shift and adapt quickly, which resulted in higher retail prices that remained above the 2019 average.

"When looking at the 2020 cherry season, we see cherry category dollars were up nearly 30 percent year over year while pounds were up 10 percent," said Shales. "Even though volume was low, these numbers indicate demand remained high. We attribute this to the quality of the cherries, which keep consumers coming back for more."

Although store trip frequency declined due to the pandemic, retailers capitalized on the opportunity to promote these seasonal items through their online shopping channels, which resulted in good online purchase rates.

"Because retailers were quick on their feet and made sure that cherries were a featured item on their online platforms, impulse purchases continued and consumers seemed willing to splurge," said Shales. "Retailers also did a great job with light colored cherries despite a smaller crop. Rainier cherry volume increased 6 percent and dollars were up 17 percent in 2020 compared to 2019. Rainiers lifted the category and sold for an average but premium price of \$5.28 per pound."

Skylar Rae brand Tip Top cv cherries also saw double-digit volume increases in 2020 with an average retail price of \$5.68 per pound. With its incredible firmness and super sweet profile, this cherry is available during key promotion weeks, which can help drive impulse sales and grow dollars in the cherry category.

"Skylar Rae cherries are a great way to bring a new item into the category as well as delight consumers," said Shales. "Between Skylar Rae cherries and our high-elevation A Half Mile Closer to the Moon cherries, retailers reaped the benefits last year."

Stemilt's A Half Mile Closer to the Moon cherries are grown in high-elevation orchards and extend the season. In 2020, the total U.S. sold 16 percent of the season's dark-sweet cherry volume in August-September timeframe and earned 20 percent of the season's dark-sweet cherry dollars.

Organic was another area of opportunity, explains Shales. It made up 2.6 percent of category volume in 2020 and is considered a great seasonal item and provides the opportunity to bring lots of dollars to the category.

“Every week matters during cherry season, so it is important retailers remain flexible during cherries and capitalize on opportunities as they arise,” said Shales. “We’re excited to fill the pent-up demand for cherries that last year’s success brought and here to help you delight consumers with our World Famous cherries.”

[Print](#)