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**Starr Ranch says don't sweat Mother Nature, NW cherries are coming**

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By

Kyle Eberth, Northwest editor

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Cherry shippers throughout the Pacific Northwest are ramping up for the start of the summer season. “The change of pace is exciting, cherries are a fun time of year,” said Dan Davis, director of business development at [Starr Ranch Growers](#).

The Wenatchee, WA-based shipper says this summer will require patience, tenacity and excellent communication — qualities the Starr team has in abundance.

“We experienced cold temperatures and snowfall last month making it still a little too early to make much of an assessment,” said Davis.

The unpredictable weather this spring has been a popular topic of conversation across the Northwest but doesn’t carry the same weight with industry professionals. Davis conveyed confidence, “we simply strive to remind our partners that navigating Mother Nature is what we do year-in and year-out — and we always grow and produce a crop.”

“At this time, it’s hard to tell the size or estimates of the crop,” said Davis. “Our estimates as of right now — and this could still change over the course of this month — have us starting at the beginning of June with a consistent run through mid to late August.”

Davis pointed to a forecast of warmer weather headed to the Northwest, which should help crop estimates take better shape. “We’re waiting to see the typical drop that comes when we start to see daily highs in the 70s and 80s,” said Davis.

This season Starr Ranch will be promoting its core varieties, including sweet dark varieties like Chelans, Tietons and the ever-popular Bing. Starr also offers the ultra-sweet Rainier, a standout with its unique yellow color and red blush. In its favor, Starr Ranch leverages a long season, getting an early start in the Mattawa district and seeing later volume from orchards out of Odell, OR. “There’s potential for an elongated season, and all of our core varieties are still going strong,” said Davis.

The June-to-August window for cherries is a particularly profitable time in the produce calendar, where retailers position the highly sought-after seasonal fruit in prime storefront locations to be rewarded by impulsive shoppers, who statistically tend to stock up with multiple bags at a time.

As a stalwart of summer displays, Cherries return the most dollars-per-square foot in the competitive summer produce season.

Regarding price optimization, Davis emphasized the delicate balance. “Even with a down crop we still have a significant volume of cherries, so it’s a balancing act between wanting to make sure the

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growers are rewarded for their efforts while maintaining a price-point that motivates consumers to pick up a couple of pounds of cherries.”

While costs may be up across the country, cherries are a healthy, sought-after summertime treat, that holds its position in up and down years.

This summer Starr cherries will feature a new HIC2 plastic pouch bag. Introduced last fall with Starr’s line of apples, Davis said, “our new recyclable pouch bag will be fully integrated into our cherry program this year.” The fully recyclable bags are made of high-density polyethylene (HDPE) plastic, “making them a popular item amongst the consumers who continue to validate sustainable initiatives,” said Davis.

“When HDPE recycling is done right, we can help by keeping non-biodegradable plastic waste out of landfills and help the environment,” said Davis. “Starr Growers continually looks to elevate our sustainability initiatives and educate consumers on the process. It’s about contributing, so we all do our part.”

Adding weather to the list of challenges facing this season, along with supply shortages and supply chain concerns, Davis stressed staying in the moment and taking the challenges as they come. “We have to take it day-by-day. We work directly with retailers to ensure all their needs are being met while evaluating how we can best respond,” he said.

Davis reiterated, “We look forward to the dialog with all of our core partners, no matter the challenge presented to us — that’s the game we’re in.”

[Kyle Eberth](#)

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## About Kyle Eberth |

Kyle Eberth is new to the produce industry, but has grown up around it, in proclaimed "Apple Capitol of the World," Wenatchee, WA. For the past 14-years he has worked in the non-profit sector with an emphasis on brand storytelling, community engagement, and donor relationships.

Kyle graduated from Whitworth University (Spokane, WA) in 2007. He and wife Kelsey were married shortly thereafter, when they moved to Wenatchee to launch their careers. Kyle is "Dad" to Brooklyn and Hudson, together the Eberths enjoy skiing, biking, their family and friends, and playing together in the beautiful place they get to live.

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