



- Advertisement -

Expect good size and quality Northwest cherry crop

By

Keith Loria

May 24, 2024

Last year was not a good cherry year for those in the Northwest, due to a large crop from both California and Washington and the states overlapping significantly.

“The California season started late, so we had very few shipping weeks for the season remaining,” said Brianna Shales, marketing director for the Wenatchee, WA-based Stemilt Growers. “Supply exceeded demand for most of June and July and it ended up reducing the overall cherry crop that went to market. Retailers sold more volume, almost 25 percent more. But because of the large crop size, it deflated prices and they were selling more volume than dollars than the year before. It was a unique season to years prior.”

This year the Northwest cherry estimate continues to drop, and it is now looking like it'll be the second-smallest crop projection in the last 10 years. The projected 17.5 million box crop out of the Pacific Northwest will be quite compressed by current projections — even California is dropping.

“We really want retailers to know that although last year was hard, this season is when we can do something about it,” Shales said. “This year’s cherries will have much better sizing, California’s season has already started.”

It’s important to take advantage of the holidays, so retailers that look to be successful during cherry season should be promoting cherries now to get ready for Memorial Day all the way through the Fourth of July.

“Give cherries the shelf space they deserve or put them at the front end of the store,” Shales said. “Keep the cold chain going by keeping them refrigerated and fresh. Ample display space is especially important because retailers have to tell consumers cherries are here. They are one of the few seasonal items left in produce, so beautiful displays and space is a terrific way to increase sales.”

Rochelle Bohm, vice president of marketing for the Wenatchee, WA-based CMI Orchards, noted success in this segment demands flexibility.

“With variables like the overlap with the California cherry season or the compressed crop that we dealt with last year, agility is key,” she said. “Our experienced growers adeptly manage these variables and turn challenges into opportunities — no matter what Mother Nature throws their way. Our team closely monitors the California crop to share updates and recommendations with our retail partners, securing a seamless transition into the Northwest crop and successful summer cherry season.”

This year it seems Mother Nature is playing nice and CMI Orchards expects to have an excellent season with less compression than last.

“We’re in a great position with consistent volumes throughout the cherry season this year — the crop is shaping up nicely to align with major summer holidays, and all signs point to good size and quality of fruit,” she said. “Our partners can feel confident in advertising cherries in a significant way — though we always recommend earmarking POS and product early for such a lucrative season.”

Bohm believes retailers need to capitalize on cross-merchandising opportunities to get the most out of this high-impact season.

“An understated star when it comes to featuring them with things like ice cream or on charcuterie platters, cherries add such an excellent dimension to elevate these offerings,” she said. “Plus, putting the best fruit forward is crucial. We always recommend refrigerating cherries where possible to ensure customers are getting the best eating experience and keep coming back for more. Cherries should be stored at 32 degrees for optimal preservation of quality and flavor.”

Furthermore, June is the perfect time of year to start planning promotions with its American Dream program.

“As the summer fast approaches, American Dream offers a way for retailers to create those multiple in-store promotional destinations, drum up excitement with the patriotic holidays upcoming, as well as get a boost in incremental sales throughout the rest of the year,” Bohm said. “It’s a program that retailers and shoppers alike can get behind, as a portion of proceeds from the sale of every box are donated to causes that support military families and veterans.”

[Keith Loria](#)

About Keith Loria |

A graduate of the University of Miami, Keith Loria is a D.C.-based award-winning journalist who has been writing for major publications for close to 20 years on topics as diverse as real estate, food and sports. He started his career with the Associated Press and has held high editorial positions at magazines aimed at healthcare, sports and technology. When not busy writing, he can be found enjoying time with his wife, Patricia, and two daughters, Jordan and Cassidy.

[Print](#)