



**PACIFIC COAST
FARMERS' MARKET
ASSOCIATION**

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HARVEST HEADLINE: CHERRY SEASON!



Cherry season is finally here but don't blink, or you'll miss it.

If you've noticed cherries popping up at the market and thought, "wait... isn't it early?" you're not wrong. This year's early heat has brought on an early season. As Matt Jones of Honest Acre in Stockton explains, "the heat did affect it. A lot of blossoms fell off early."

Mike Billigmeier of B&B Ranch in Linden echoes that: "We had a March with record-high temperatures, so that just kind of moved things up."

The heat didn't just shift the calendar; it also shaped the crop. Ethan McGaffey of Diablo Cherries notes that "if it gets above 80 degrees while in full bloom, it can degrade and kill pollen," meaning some varieties will be lighter this year.

What was shaping up to be a standout season slightly changed course toward the end. McGaffey says "It really looked like there was going to be a huge explosion of cherries and then that week of heat brought us back from the clouds... we're at a decent crop, not as good as we were hoping for."

There's always a bit of variability when it comes to growing cherries. "If we get a substantial amount of rain, there'll be a considerable amount of potential splitting and cracking," says Matt Lucchesi of CalRiver.

Still, there's plenty to look forward to at the market. Early varieties like Coral Champagne, Santana, and Royal Tioga are already showing up, with Rainiers and the classic Bing close behind. Late in the season, shoppers can expect Lapins, known for their deep color and extra-sweet flavor.

Part of the fun is tasting your way through the varieties as cherry season progresses. Even so, Bing tends to steal the spotlight, at least among our cherry vendors.

"The Bing is just, to me, the sweetest, best tasting cherry," Lucchesi says. "Super sweet, probably the best flavor," Jones says. McGaffey agrees: "There's nothing that really beats a super ripe Bing cherry."

Everyone has their own favorite, but no matter which you choose, the best way to enjoy them hasn't changed.

"Straight off the tree... there's no better way," McGaffey says.

And while most of us don't have a cherry tree in the backyard, a trip to your local farmers' market gets you pretty close.

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