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Happy cherry season!

No Aussie Christmas is complete without this stone fruit, so try **Ross Dobson's** festive sweet and savoury recipes.

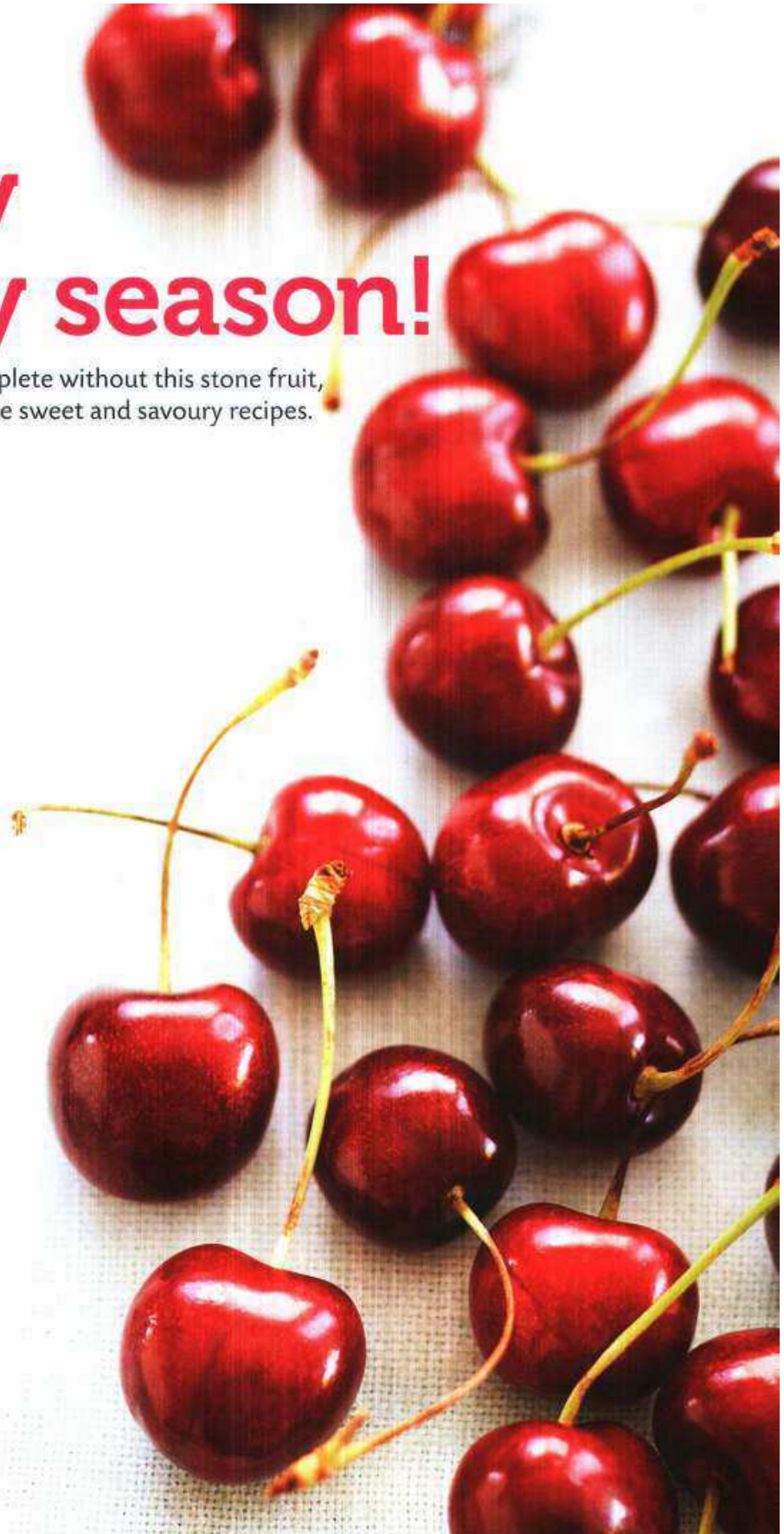
In Australia, we're lucky that festive-coloured cherries are at their sweetest and most affordable in the holiday months, and buying a boxful has become a wonderful Christmas tradition in many homes. Make the most of this seasonal purchase with my tips for choosing and using this fabulous fruit.

CHOOSE shiny, plump cherries with green stems attached – the darker the colour, the sweeter the fruit. Avoid small cherries, which are usually immature and lacking in flavour and juiciness.

STORE in a fruit bowl – cherries are highly perishable, but they're so delicious and more-ish that they won't be there long. Or keep unwashed cherries in a plastic bag in the fridge for a few days.

PREPARE by removing the stones before cooking. This can be tricky, as the flesh is easily bruised and precious juice is lost. Your best bet is to use a cherry pitter, which looks a bit like a stapler and removes the stones without damaging the fruit.

SERVE fresh cherries with dark chocolate for a simple dessert, or add them to sweets that include cream and custard or anything with cake. In terms of savoury dishes, cherries work well with pork, duck and that festive bird, turkey. Or try your hand at my favourite cherry recipes in the pages that follow.



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IN SEASON

with Ross Dobson

**White choc cheesecake
with vanilla cherries**

SERVES 10 PREP 20mins COOK 25mins

CHILL overnight

MAKE IT AHEAD • FAMILY FAVOURITE

I've added cherries and white chocolate to give this popular Aussie dessert a festive flavour.

- 160g plain sweet biscuits, coarsely broken
- 125g caster sugar, plus 1 tbsp extra
- 100g unsalted butter, melted
- 3½ cups (500g) white chocolate melts
- 250g cream cheese, softened
- 1 cup (250g) mascarpone
- ½ cup (125ml) thickened cream

vanilla cherries

- 250g cherries, halved, pitted
- ¼ cup (40g) pure icing sugar
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 2 tsp cornflour

- 1** Preheat oven to 180C or 160C fan. Place biscuit and extra caster sugar in a food processor and process until fine crumbs form. Add melted butter and process until combined.
- 2** Transfer crumb mixture to a 23cm springform pan. Using fingers or base of a glass, press over base of pan. Bake for 15 mins, until golden. Cool.
- 3** Melt chocolate in a heatproof bowl set over a saucepan of gently simmering water on low heat, stirring, until smooth and glossy. Cool.

- 4** Using an electric mixer, beat cream cheese and caster sugar until well combined. Add mascarpone and thickened cream and beat until smooth. Gradually pour in melted chocolate, beating constantly, until combined. Pour over biscuit base and refrigerate overnight, until set.
 - 5** Meanwhile, to make vanilla cherries, combine cherry, icing sugar, vanilla, cornflour and ¾ cup water in a pan on high heat. Bring to boil. Reduce heat to low and simmer for 4-5 mins, until sauce thickens and cherries are soft. Cool completely.
 - 6** Remove cheesecake from pan. Top with vanilla cherries and serve.
- In each serve 2705 kilojoules, 8g protein, 51g total fat (33g sat fat), 62g carbohydrate (53g sugar), 1g fibre, 196g sodium.**



SPECIAL OCCASION



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Simple Cherry Trifle



Cherry Flan

simple cherry trifle

Stir 3 cups pitted cherries, $\frac{2}{3}$ cup sherry and $\frac{1}{4}$ cup caster sugar in a frying pan on high heat for 5 mins, until cherries just soften. Cool. Drain cherries over a bowl, reserving syrup. Cut 300g ready-made jam Swiss roll into 1cm-thick slices. Arrange Swiss roll over base and sides of a large glass serving bowl. Spoon over one-third of cherries and half of reserved syrup. Top with 1 cup custard. Repeat cherry, syrup and custard layers. Spoon over $\frac{1}{2}$ cup whipped cream. Top with remaining cherries and 50g lightly toasted flaked almonds. Serves 8.

cherry flan

Preheat oven to 180C or 160C fan. Line a loose-based 34cm x 11cm fluted tart pan with 2 sheets thawed frozen sweet shortcrust pastry. Trim edges. Bake for 15 mins, until golden. Scatter 300g pitted cherries over base of tart shell. Using an electric mixer, beat 2 eggs, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup caster sugar and 2 tbsp plain flour until thick and pale. Heat 150g unsalted butter in a small saucepan on medium, until butter is melted, golden and has a nutty aroma. Quickly beat hot butter into egg mixture until well combined, then pour over cherries in tart shell. Bake for 40-45 mins, until golden. Beat $\frac{1}{2}$ cup pure cream, 1 tbsp pure icing sugar and $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp almond essence until soft peaks form. Slice tart and serve with whipped cream. Serves 8.

Buying a boxful of cherries has become a wonderful Christmas tradition in many homes.

Ross Dobson

Roast turkey with cherry sauce

**SERVES 12 PREP 30mins COOK 2hrs 10mins
SPECIAL OCCASION • FAMILY FAVOURITE**

I've chosen a turkey about as small as you can get so it cooks in just two hours. The stuffing is really good and also goes well with chicken and pork. The cherry sauce is slightly boozy and very festive – just right for the Christmas bird.

125g butter, at room temperature

2 eschalots, finely sliced

1 small garlic clove, finely chopped

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup (30g) chopped walnuts

12 sage leaves, finely chopped

4 cups (280g) fresh breadcrumbs

5kg turkey, giblets and neck removed

cherry sauce

300ml port

200ml crème de cassis (blackcurrant liqueur)

1 tbsp cornflour

400g cherries, halved, pitted

1 tbsp caster sugar

1 tsp ground cinnamon

1 Preheat oven to 180C or 160C fan. Melt 75g of butter in a frying pan on medium heat until foaming. Add eschalot and garlic and cook for 2-3 mins, until softened. Add walnut and sage and cook, stirring, for 1 min, until fragrant. Transfer to a large bowl. Add breadcrumbs, season well and stir to combine.

2 Rinse turkey inside and out under cold running water, then pat dry with paper towel. Spoon stuffing into turkey cavity, then tie legs together. Rub remaining butter over skin. Place turkey, breast side up, in a large baking pan.

3 Bake for 2 hrs, basting with pan juices every 25 mins, until juices run clear when a skewer is inserted into thickest part of thigh. Transfer turkey to a large platter, cover loosely with foil and rest while making cherry sauce. Pour off all but $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of pan juices.

4 To make cherry sauce, mix together port, crème de cassis and cornflour in a jug until smooth. Heat reserved pan juices in a frying pan on medium. Add port mixture, cherry, sugar and cinnamon and simmer for 4-5 mins, until sauce bubbles and thickens, and cherries are just tender. Transfer sauce to a serving bowl. Serve turkey with cherry sauce.

In each serve 2942 kilojoules, 53g protein, 35g total fat (14g sat fat), 34g carbohydrate (17g sugar), 2g fibre, 556mg sodium.





IN SEASON

with Ross Dobson

Roast Turkey
with Cherry Sauce

NEXT DAY'S
LUNCH