

CHEERRIES

The New RED HOT 'Super Fruit'

The battle for 'superfood' supremacy is heating up with a new scientific report proclaiming fresh cherries as a red-hot wonder-fruit, despite most Australians being in the dark about how high they are in disease-fighting antioxidants.

A national Newspoll survey has revealed that of a range of popular summer fruit, most consumers associate blueberries (71 percent) and strawberries (58 percent) with high levels of antioxidants with only 45 percent seeing cherries in this way, but this is at odds with The Australian Cherry Report, a summary of global scientific literature on the potential health and wellbeing benefits of cherries. Amongst the key findings, the report claims that compared to various berries known for their powerful nutritional properties, cherries are the richest sources of certain anthocyanins, a type of

antioxidant responsible for the deep red colour that has been linked to a variety of health benefits.

Further, sour cherries ranked 14 in the top 50 foods for highest antioxidant content per serve, and are among well known 'superfoods' such as red wine, berries and dark chocolate. Report author, Accredited Exercise Physiologist and Nutritionist Kathleen Alleaume, said although based mainly on animal and laboratory studies, the scientific evidence supporting the super-fruit's nutritional power is mounting and means cherries should not be seen as simply a Christmas indulgence.

"Fresh, succulent Australian cherries are jam-packed with antioxidants and contain other phytonutrients - plant pigments that may offer protection

against heart disease, reduce inflammation and ease arthritis and gout pain and reduce the risk of diabetes," Ms Alleaume said. "Cherries also have a potential role in slowing the signs of skin ageing. Free radicals are believed to be a major contributing factor in the production of fine lines and wrinkles by destroying the collagen and elastin network which keeps skin supple and firm. Eating foods rich in antioxidants, such as cherries, may help reduce and neutralise the free radicals," she said.

Ms Alleaume said with so much going for cherries, including their fantastic taste, it makes sense to ditch unhealthy processed snack foods in favour of sweet Australian cherries, available from late October to February with supply peaking in December and January. "It's easy to enjoy luscious fresh cherries every day in a variety of ways. For example you can include them in a trail mix as a snack, juice them for a refreshing post-workout

drink or use them as a sweet addition to a savoury entree or main meal. "With virtually no fat and only 250 kilojoules or 60 calories per 100 grams, cherries are a guilt-free indulgence so go crazy and have as many as you want," she said.

CHEERRIES AT A GLANCE

- A true "super fruit" - Emerging studies suggest phytonutrients found in cherries may have the ability to reduce the risk of heart disease, diabetes and even alleviate gout and arthritis pain.
- Antioxidant advantage - Cherries are a power-packed food loaded with certain anthocyanins, the antioxidants responsible for their deep red colour - and other flavonoid antioxidants such as quercetin and kaempferol.
- Essential nutrients - Cherries provide a good source of vitamin C and a source of potassium and fibre.

THE AUSTRALIAN CHERRY INDUSTRY

Australia produces an average of 10,000 tonnes of cherries annually, worth around \$90 - \$100 million, across five states, with around 3,700 hectares of area under production.

In New South Wales, Young is a key production area as well as Orange and Bathurst. Other significant areas include the Dandenong Ranges and Goulburn Valley near Melbourne, the Mount Lofty Ranges and the Riverland area of South Australia, the Huon Valley and Derwent Valley in Tasmania, and the elevated southwest region of Western Australia.

Around 80% of produce is consumed domestically with the remaining 20% exported to an increasing number of markets around the world. The industry aims to grow the export market to 50% of its production in line with anticipated growth in supply.

For a copy of The Australian Cherry Report and new ways to love cherries visit www.lovesummerlovecherries.com.au

