

SBALT NEWS

The much-anticipated cherry season is upon us!

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The California cherry season is no ordinary affair – it's a celebration of vibrancy, beginning mid-May and usually lasting into early June. This short season goes by so quickly, which results in consumer demand for California cherries. The demand is not only due to the short season, but also because cherries are nutritious, versatile, and commonly used for culinary purposes. You can eat them fresh, make jam, or add to your favorite baked goods, salads, mixed drinks, and even entrees!

San Benito County plants about 400 acres of cherries. Of these 400 acres, Phil Foster



The cherry orchards at Pinnacle Organics/Phil Foster Ranch.

Ranch in San Juan Bautista plants five acres of organic cherries. Katherine Foster states, "Along the driveway we have Black Tartarians, which are an early cherry and pollinator. If you haven't had a cherry since the end of the previous cherry season, you will enjoy

them. We have Vans, Lapin, Coral Champagne, and Sweetheart varieties, which are Bing-like but extend the harvest season and are better suited to our climate. We still have a couple of Bing trees at the ranch in Santa Ana Valley and hopefully they will

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produce this year and serve as a control for taste comparisons with the other varieties. We also grow Raniers, a white cherry. We will be displaying the different varieties as they are ready, and they will be labeled so that customers at our farm stand can do a taste comparison." She continues, "The bloom looks really good this year compared to last year and last year was an OK yield year. It's too early to know what the yield will be; a lot can happen between now and June."

California cherries are the first springtime fruit to hit the stores and signify the start of summer. Consumers are excited to see something fresh in the produce section and usually clamor to get them while they can as cherries are not usually stocked year-round.

To find cherry recipes and learn more about the Phil Foster Ranch Conservation Easement, visit us online at www.sanbenitolandtrust.org. Email info@sanbenitolandtrust.org if you are interested in volunteering on one of SBALT's committees. ■