
Cherry tomatoes



Market requirements

Varieties: Gardeners' Delight, Cherita and Evita are the most popular; Cherry Wonder is also bought. Growers need to ensure they obtain the most recent European seed varieties: crop development is still under way

Standards: The EEC has minimum quality requirements for tomatoes, which also apply to cherry tomatoes. The sizing provisions do not apply, however. Tomatoes must be:

- intact
- fresh-looking
- sound (produce affected by rotting or deterioration such as to make it unfit for human consumption is excluded)
- clean, practically free of visible foreign matter
- free of abnormal external moisture
- free of foreign smell and/or taste

Four classes are defined: Extra, Classes I, II and III, with Extra requiring superior quality, with no defects, Class I allowing slight defects, and Class II defects including healed cracks of more than 3 cm. However, cherry tomatoes must be of Extra or Class I quality to be accepted on the market

Size: Acceptable size ranges from 10 to 30 mm, depending upon variety. 25 to 30 mm is more popular. Uniformity in punnet is essential

Shape: Uniform round

Cherry tomatoes

Colour: Red, though an element of green is acceptable in some varieties
Yellow is being sold in the summer months

Ripeness: Firm, colour 8/9 on the Dutch colour chart, though green is allowed, providing it reaches the store ready to eat

Taste &

Texture: Sweet, juicy

Getting to market

Harvesting, Handling and Storage

Cherry tomatoes are susceptible to damage and must be hand-picked and handled carefully. They should be pre-cooled and cool chained to the store at between 7 and 8°C, at a relative humidity of 90%. This can extend shelf-life to 14 days maximum, but this is also dependent upon the stage of ripeness at picking, which has to be assessed according to shipment time and buyers' requirements.

Packaging

Cherry tomatoes have to be packed at source in order to minimise handling damage. They are usually packed in plastic punnets (Sharpak) of 227 grams, which are packed 12 to a carton before air-freighting. They must be labelled:

- by origin
- with name of packer and/or dispatcher
- as cherry tomatoes and, optionally, by variety
- date of packing
- by class

It is also advisable to include the following handling information on the carton:

- side-up symbol
- fragile symbol
- temperature guidance

Branding and Promotion

The Dutch have carried out targetted promotion of cherry tomatoes, under the umbrella of Dutch vegetable promotion. The Spanish also include them

(continued)

Cherry tomatoes

in their promotions of fresh produce. Branding is not a major feature of the market. Multiples are willing to consider in-store promotions of cherry tomatoes at short notice, particularly in winter months, when supplies of good quality can be scarce. They welcome an approach from their supplying growers as to when they will be providing high quality cherry tomatoes in quantity.

Import Regulations

Cherry tomatoes come under the tariff heading for tomatoes, number 0702 00, but this is further divided, as tariffs in force differ over two periods. Tariff number 0702 00 10 covers 1 Nov-14 May and 0702 00 90 covers 15 May-31 Oct and the tariffs in force are as follows:

0702 00 10

Full tariff:	11%(min 2 ECU/1kg)
GSP countries:	Full tariff
ACP countries:	4.4%(min 0.8 ECU) except: Full (1-14 May and 1-14 Nov)
Turkey:	Free
Canary Islands:	3.8%(min 0.7 ECU) except: 1.9%(min 0.3 ECU) 1 Jan-29 Feb 6.5%(min 1.2 ECU) 16 Apr-14 May
Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria:	4.4%(min 0.8 ECU) except: 2.4% (min 0.4 ECU) 1 Jan-29 Feb Full tariff (1-14 May and 1-14 Nov)
Cyprus:	3.2% (min 0.5 ECU) except 4.4% (min 0.8 ECU) 1-31 Dec Full tariff (1-14 May and 1-14 Nov)
Malta:	4.4% (min 0.8 ECU) except: Full tariff (1-14 May and 1 Nov-14 Dec)
Egypt:	2.4% (min 0.4 ECU) 1 Jan-29 Feb 4% (min 0.7 ECU) 1-31Mar and 15-31 Dec 4.4% (min 0.8 ECU) 1-14 Dec Full tariff other periods
Jordan:	2.4% (min 0.8 ECU) 1 Jan-29 Feb 4.4% (min 0.8 ECU) 1-31 Mar and 1-31 Dec Full tariff other periods

0702 00 90

Full tariff:	18% (min 3.5 ECU)
Canary Islands:	6.5 (min 1.2 ECU)
Turkey:	Free

In order to receive preferential tariff treatment, produce must be accompanied by the appropriate forms: EUR 1 for ACP countries or Form A for LDDC. There are further complications in obtaining preferential tariffs in

Cherry tomatoes

that all entries are subject to quota and to the reference price system, through which a compensatory tax is levied on produce if CIF prices are below the price set seasonally (or for part of a season) by the EEC. Certain hygiene standards must be met and all fresh produce entering the EEC must be accompanied by the original of a phytosanitary certificate (see Appendix 1).

When to sell

Timing

There is UK production of cherry tomatoes from March to September and Spain, the Canary Islands and Portugal are the major suppliers during winter months. Other suppliers are:

Kenya:	January-April
Morocco:	January-March
Zambia:	May-August
Zimbabwe:	October-February

There is a gap for high quality suppliers from December to the end of February, when buyers are unable to source the flavour and quality they require. Israel is currently trying to enter the market in this period and obtaining very high prices. There is also a winter gap, though the market is on a rather smaller scale, for yellow cherry tomatoes, which no one is offering during this period.

Prices are not as regularly quoted on the wholesale market as for other vegetables, but on the basis of the limited prices quoted in 1989/90 the average was 115 pence per kg, with a range from 50 to 330 pence. Retail prices in the winter months in 1990 have been as high as 415 pence per kg, indicating that the variation is likely to be even higher than that seen in wholesale market quotations. Multiples are keen to negotiate contracts with forward pricing for six weeks or more, in order to obtain guaranteed supplies from a source over a reasonable period. If prices fluctuate to too great an extent, it is difficult to balance supply and demand on the retail market.

Market Trends

Cherry tomatoes are not listed separately from tomatoes in the trade statistics, so it is difficult to estimate the quantities coming on to the market. However, trade sources suggest that it must be a minimum of £4 million at retail value and showing strong growth. Quantities sold increased by at least 20% in 1989 over the previous year and are forecast to continue increasing. Although predominantly a salad crop, the cherry tomato is also likely to increase in popularity owing to its importance in catering and as a mini-vegetable suitable for stir-frying.