



Chukar Cherry Company
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Large but Late Northwest Cherry Crop Pushes Cherry Drying Back Several Weeks

Prosser, WA, June 24th, 2011—Due to an unusually cold and wet spring, the 2011 Northwest cherry crop is anticipated to peak after the 4th of July. This is ten to fourteen days later than the typical peak. According to B.J. Thurlby, President of the Washington State Fruit Commission, “When you have the coldest April on record, and the third-wettest May ever...the inevitable result is a later harvest.”

However, the Northwest Cherry Growers Association estimated in early June that Northwest cherry output would total about 17.2 million boxes. With the exception of the 2009 crop year, this may be one of the largest harvests in the past ten years with a 22 percent increase from 2010. Traditionally, cherry growers have a 90-day window in which to market their cherries. This means that fresh cherries will likely be available to consumers into September.

However, the fresh cherry market is not the only market affected the late spring. Chukar Cherries, a specialty food producer of naturally dried and chocolate-covered cherries is headquartered in Prosser—the heart of one of Washington’s main cherry growing regions. Chukar dries fresh cherries from over a dozen Northwest growers using a unique, all natural drying process. Normally Chukar’s primary drying period runs through July and possibly into August. However, with the delayed harvest, cherry drying is expected to go from mid July through mid to late August.

Chukar Cherries provides Northwest cherry growers with an alternate market for their fresh cherries. By specifying a high brix value in their fruit prior to picking, Chukar ensures quality, facilitates drying and preserves fresh cherry flavor in their products.

After being handpicked at the orchard, cherries are cooled and transported to the Chukar Cherries factory in Prosser where they are sorted, pitted and dried without the use of sugar or preservatives. This process allows Northwest cherries to be enjoyed throughout the year.

The Chukar Story

In 1988 our family launched Chukar Cherries on our beloved cherry orchard to showcase the natural bounty of Washington's fruit lands. To this day, our approach in the Chukar Kitchen is simple—transform tree-ripened local fruits and hearty nuts into freshly made, extraordinary cherry and chocolate gifts.

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