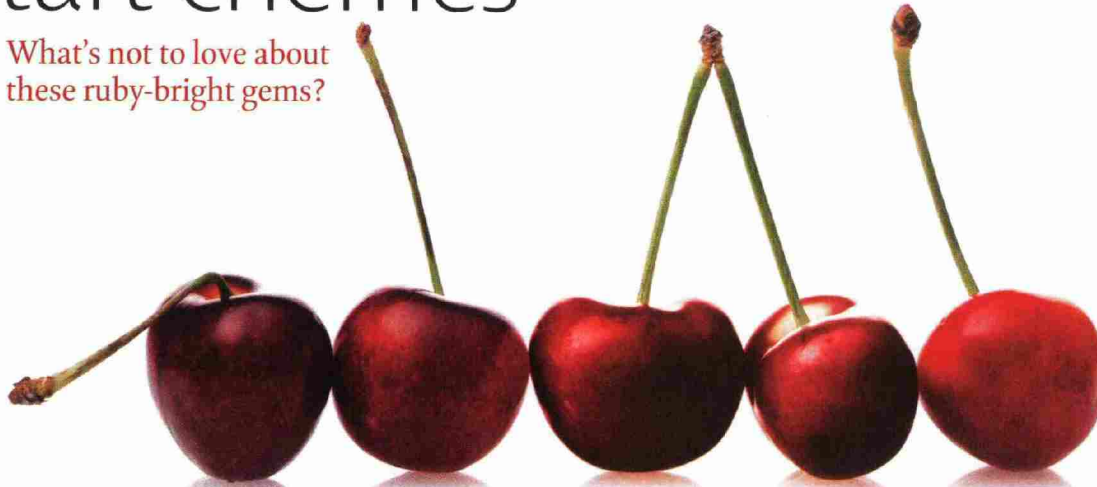


healing foods

BY Matthew G. Kadey, RD RECIPE BY Mary Margaret Chappell

tart cherries

What's not to love about these ruby-bright gems?



HOW IT HEALS It's about time more of us were sweet on tart cherries. Also known as sour (or pie) cherries, these fruits of the *Prunus cerasus* tree are packed with anthocyanins, potent antioxidants responsible for the fruit's rosy hue. Anthocyanins are also believed to reduce inflammation and oxidative stress and slow mental decline, says Elizabeth Somer, RD, author of *Eat Your Way to Happiness*. A 2009 *Journal of Nutrition* study reported that drinking tart cherry juice may decrease oxidative damage to body cells, thereby acting as a deterrent against cancer, heart disease, and Alzheimer's. In fact, tart cherries contain more antioxidants, including vitamin C, than their sweeter counterparts. Each serving of this stone fruit also abounds in beta-carotene. "The body uses beta-carotene to make vitamin A and maintain a healthy immune system," Somer explains.

Tired of counting sheep? Cherries are one of the few food sources of melatonin,

a compound touted for improving sleep patterns and easing the effects of jet lag.

EAT IT UP While tart cherries are mostly sold frozen, juiced, or dried, during the summer months you can often find them fresh at farmers' markets. Varieties include Montmorency, Early Richmond, and Balaton. Beyond featuring tart cherries in pies, try them in jams, salsas, compotes, bread puddings, and ultra-refreshing granitas. "Or use them to make a luscious sauce for pancakes, waffles, and ice cream," Somer suggests.

Keep a stash of dried tart cherries on hand for a nutrient-packed snack, or toss them into chili, coleslaw, quinoa, pilafs, relishes, green salads, baked good batters, or DIY granola and trail mix.

Somer adds a splash of lip-puckering tart cherry juice to smoothies, vinaigrettes, iced teas, and rice cooking water. Combined with balsamic vinegar and reduced, cherry juice also makes a fruity glaze to brighten up grilled tofu or

veggies. Or cut with seltzer water for a sultry summer spritzer.

Make sure you choose 100 percent juice, "and opt for unsweetened frozen or dried tart cherries to cut back on sugar intake," Somer says.

Tart Cherry Yogurt

SERVES 8 | 30 MINUTES OR FEWER

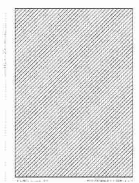
Making your own flavored yogurt is easy with tart cherry juice and dried tart cherries. The mixture will keep up to one week in the fridge, which means you can serve yourself a dose of tart cherries whenever you like.

- ½ cup unsweetened tart cherry juice
- ¼ cup chopped dried unsweetened tart cherries
- 3 Tbs. agave nectar
- 1 32-oz. container plain soy yogurt

Stir cherry juice, chopped dried cherries, and agave nectar into a container of soy yogurt until well combined.

PER ¼-CUP SERVING: 119 CAL; 3 G PROT; 2 G TOTAL FAT (≤1 G SAT FAT); 22 G CARB; 0 MG CHOL; 16K MG SOD; 2 G FIBER; 15 G SUGARS

Canada-based writer Matthew G. Kadey, RD, admits to a weakness for chocolate-covered tart cherries.



Supplement Savvy

As an adjunct to a well-balanced diet, consider taking one or two tart cherry extract veg caps daily with meals for an antioxidant boost.