

# FARMER IN THE FIELD



## HAPPY CHERRY SEASON!

By Bonnie Swank

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Every now and then we'll get a request for tart cherries, varieties we don't grow. Tart cherries are usually grown in areas with cooler climates like those in Michigan, known for their production of tart cherries. These cherries are good for pies and jams but have a higher acidity level and are not that palatable when eaten fresh. Now some of you may be raising your eyebrows in protest of this statement but growing up in the heart of California's agriculture it's my opinion there is nothing better than a fresh picked **sweet cherry**. California is known for growing the world's finest cherries and according to the California Cherry Board this bold statement can be made because in the orchards of the San Joaquin and Santa Clara Valleys, cherries receive the perfect combination of nutrient-rich soil, abundant sunshine and mild temperatures needed to produce exquisite fruit.

The California cherry season starts late April in Bakersfield located at the southern tip of the San Joaquin Valley. The cherries ripen in succession north to Fresno, Linden, Lodi and Sacramento when it jumps to the Santa Clara valley moving south to Hollister where we are the last to pick cherries in California. Bing cherries are the king of sweet cherries making them the most popular cherry to plant. With one variety planted in an orchard the fruit ripens at the same time and are picked within the span of a week. When Dick started planting our cherry orchard over twenty years ago he planted five different varieties of cherries, a decision he wasn't sure was a good one. By the time he finished the orchard he had six varieties, Brook, Tulare, Bing, Utah Giant, Rainer and Lapin. His decision turned out to be a good one because our season spans five weeks making our customers very happy.