

**Seasonal Eating**  
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**Fresh Summer Cherries**  
**June 2019**

Cherries in the south are just – well – unpredictable. I think it's been three years since my last southern, local cherries. The frost gets the blooms or the birds eat the ripening fruit before we can harvest. Like daisies are the friendliest flower, I think cherries are the friendliest fruit. They beckon with their red, shiny skins and sweet juicy flavor and they're just cute. They usher in summer and I finally got six quarts of sweet cherries over at Forgie's Fruit Farm near Lewisburg this week – the last of the crop. In fact, I received an e-mail stating that they are going to tear out the cherry trees and replace them with more of their wonderful peach trees over the next year. I'm sad.



Cherries are probably my favorite fruit – I can eat them by the bowlful, carefully getting every bit off the pits. They can be somewhat time consuming to cook with since they do have to be pitted – but it is worth the effort. A helpful tool is the cherry pitter, a small, handheld tool that plunges a prong through the cherry pushing out the pit. But you still have to check to be sure the pit came out. You can also cut the cherries in half around the pit and pull it out. Either way is a little messy due to the juice and I always put down a couple of layers of paper towels to help absorb what drips off and collect the pits. I usually use the pitter first and then cut them in half, checking for any missed pits.

Fresh cherries are great for salads or salsas and chutneys and jams. They are also famous in baked goods like pastries, cakes, quick breads and pies. A constant partner with cherries is almond. Mom always added a little almond extract to cherry pie, whether using fresh or canned cherries or even to the canned pie filling. So after freezing several quarts for pies later in the year, I used my fresh cherries for a Cherry Frangipane Tart.

Frangipane is a filling normally made with ground almonds, sugar, butter and eggs. It bakes up to a pillowy, soft filling for tarts and other baked goods. The almond flavor pairs well with all sorts of fruits like peaches, pears, blueberries, rhubarb, and, of course, cherries.

The tart recipe below uses a *pâte sablée* dough. It is sweet and crisp and more like a shortbread cookie than a flaky pastry crust – perfect for tarts. It is baked empty (blind baked). Then the frangipane is added and cherry halves are placed on top and it's baked until the frangipane is golden brown and set. A unique alternative to cherry pie, give this dessert a try with cherries this month.

Visit the Bedford County Extension website for more recipes and information about seasonal eating ([bedford.tennessee.edu](http://bedford.tennessee.edu)).

## **Cherry Frangipane Tart**

Tart Dough:

- 1 cup butter, softened
- 1 cup powdered sugar
- 1 egg yolk
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 2 1/4 cups flour

In a stand mixer, cream butter, sugar, egg yolk and salt until smooth. Add flour and slowly mix until dough is uniform. Turn dough out and using your hands, form into two discs. Wrap and chill dough 15-30 minutes. Roll one disc of the chilled pastry between two sheets of parchment paper to an 11" circle and place in a 9" removable bottom tart pan. Press the sides into the flutes and cut off excess dough around the top. Chill 30 more minutes in the pan. Line with crinkled up and flattened parchment paper and fill with pie weights (or beans). Bake at 400 degrees for 5 minutes. Reduce heat to 350 degrees and continue to bake for 10 minutes. Remove weights and paper and bake another 5-10 minutes until the center of the bottom is lightly browned (may need to cover edges with foil to prevent over browning). Let cool. (You can freeze the other round to use later.)

Filling:

- 1 cup slivered almonds
- 1 tablespoon flour
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 1/2 cup butter, softened
- 2 eggs
- 1 teaspoon almond extract
- 1 1/2 cups pitted and halved red cherries

In a small food processor, grind the almonds, flour and sugar together until finely ground. Place in a stand mixer bowl and add butter, mixing well. Add eggs and almond extract and mix until smooth and creamy. Spread into tart shell. Top with a single layer of cherries, cut side down. Bake at 375 degrees until golden, 30 - 40 minutes (may need to put foil around edges to prevent crust from over-browning). It will be browned on top and a toothpick will come out clean. Let cool slightly and then place on a large can and remove ring. Let completely cool. Store in the refrigerator but let come to room temperature to serve.