



Ground Cherry

Ground Cherries remind me of those glowing orange Chinese lanterns that appear in dried flower arrangements around Halloween. They *are* in the same family but ground cherries have a secret within—a small, sweet, fruit that is a revelation to the taste buds. Other members in the nightshade family (), include tomatillos and Cape gooseberries as well as the more familiar tomatoes, eggplant and peppers. The 3000 members of this family are distributed worldwide but originated and continue to be concentrated in tropical America.

Ground cherries, tomatillos, and Cape gooseberries all share the genus 'physalis' which means bladder in Greek and accounts for the dried calyx that protects the fruit. There are over 100 species in this genus and several grow wild in the United States. American Indians used a relative of the ground cherry to make sauces.

Today, tomatillos have reached new levels of popularity due to the increased interest in authentic Mexican cuisine. However, ground cherries are still very rare. This is unfortunate because they are fairly easy to

grow and one plant can produce up to 300 fruits! They can be stored in a well-ventilated place with their calyx attached for up to 6 months with good results. With their calyx removed, they freeze well for year-round use.

Ground cherries are also very versatile in the kitchen because they can be used in savory as well as sweet applications. Ground cherries can be included in fruit salads, quick bread or muffin recipes, dipped in chocolate fondue, dried like raisins, made into salsa verde, or simply used as a garnish for a plate of summer heirloom tomatoes. Just pull back the calyx and use it as a handle to pop the berry in your mouth!

Adapted from a recipe in Vegetables from Amaranth to Zucchini by Elizabeth Schneider

GROUND CHERRY GAZPACHO

1 ½ c. husked ground cherries (about 3 pints)
enough water to cover
1 small white onion (cippolinis would work)
2 medium cucumbers
¾ tsp. green peppercorns (from Penzey's)
1 small bunch of cilantro, stems removed
¼ c. basil leaves, lightly packed
2 tbsp. lime juice
1 tsp. salt
small red cherry tomatoes, halved for garnish
Instructions appear on the back.

ALMOND AND GROUND CHERRY TORTE

2/3 c. unsalted butter
¾ c. granulated sugar
1 c. almonds, ground
1 c. flour
1 ½ tsp. baking powder
½ tsp. salt
1 egg
1 tsp. ground cinnamon
1 pint ground cherries

Sift flour baking powder, cinnamon and salt. Cream butter and sugar until light and fluffy. Beat in the egg. Stir in the almonds and flour. The dough will be stiff. Spread half the batter into a greased and floured eight inch cake pan. Cover with the fruit and dot with remaining dough, almost covering fruit. Bake for 45-50 minutes at 350 degrees. Serve dusted with powdered sugar.



*Recipes and information provided by Harmony Valley Farm; its farmers and staff.
For more information go to www.harmonyvalleyfarm.com*

A Midwestern Palette - Eating With the Seasons

Though many fresh foods are available year round, our regional agricultural community, and the urban communities surrounded by them, benefit when we choose to eat seasonally, from local producers. Knowing the seasonality of our favorite produce allows us to make informed choices.

Jan Feb Mar Apr May June July Aug Sept Oct. Nov Dec

Ground Cherry Season

Ground Cherries are available fresh in the Midwest from late July through frost. They store well, when refrigerated, so may be found well into fall.

Preparation and Storage Tips

The papery calyx must be removed before use. If you find the berries inside to be a bit on the green side, leave in shallow container, uncovered for 1 - 5 days, in warm, dry place, to ripen.

They can be stored in a well-ventilated, cool place with their calyx attached for up to 6 months with good results. With their calyx removed, they can be stored refrigerated for weeks. They freeze well for year-round use.

To freeze, remove husk, rinse, pat dry and freeze on cookie sheet in 1 layer. When frozen, loosen and store in ziplock, freezer weight bag. Frozen ground cherries can be used like fresh in any cooked application. Ground cherries can be dried. Halve and place individually on drying rack until dry but not brittle. Store in air-tight container for up to 3 months.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR GROUND CHERRY GAZPACHO

Place the cleaned ground cherries in a sauce pan. Cover with water and bring to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer until tender, about 10 minutes. Cool ground cherries. Peel and quarter the onion. Peel, seed and chunk the cucumbers. Combine onion, cucumber, green peppercorns, cilantro and basil in a blender or food processor. Puree until almost smooth. Add ground cherries with their liquid and the lime juice and salt. Puree. Chill until ready to serve. Adjust seasonings and garnish with tiny basil leaves and halved cherry tomatoes.

Raspberries are a good match for ground cherries so if you are not ready to tackle a 100% ground cherry pie, use half raspberries instead.

GROUND CHERRY PIE

4 c. ground cherries, husked
½ c. sugar
2 tsp. instant tapioca
2 Tbsp. flour
juice of a lemon
2 Tbsp. butter
1 recipe of your favorite double crust pie dough

Preheat oven to 450 degrees. Mix filling ingredients except butter. Put filling in bottom of pie crust. Dot with butter. Cover with pie crust. Decorate with pie scraps and cut steam vents. Bake at 450 for 10 minutes. Reduce heat to 350 degrees and bake for 40 minutes.

Harmony Valley Farm is a family owned farm in western Wisconsin, dedicated to producing high quality, beautifully clean, and deliciously fresh certified organic produce. Our farming methods protect the environment and enhance diversity.