



### **Chukar Cherries Celebrates 35 Years of Leadership by Women**

International Women's Day Coincides with Iconic Washington Company's 35<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

*Prosser, WA, February 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2023*—This spring, Chukar Cherries—Washington State's tree-to-table specialty food company—celebrates 35 years in business. Started on the family orchard in 1988 by Founder and CEO Pam Montgomery, the company remains family-owned and firmly rooted in Washington's fruit lands.

March 8<sup>th</sup> is International Women's Day, an invitation to reflect on the achievements of women. For Chukar, these achievements are obvious. From the beginning, a pioneering spirit and constant innovation has distinguished the woman-led company. The local food scene was in its infancy when Montgomery started Chukar in the 1980s. Experts at UC Davis told her that she could not dry cherries without preservatives and added sugar. Undeterred, Montgomery began drying tree-ripened cherries from the family orchard in homemade window boxes. The concept worked which led her to begin drying cherries on a larger scale and covering them in European-style chocolate.

Thirty-five years later, Chukar has grown from a fledgling enterprise into an iconic Northwest cherry and chocolate gifting brand. Everything is still made at the original location in south central Washington. Chukar dehydrates nearly 500,000 pounds of fresh Northwest cherries annually and employs 50+ team members at the factory headquarters in Prosser, WA and at the company's store in Seattle's Pike Place Market. While Chukar is famous for their *no sugar added* dried cherries (the original product), they now offer over 18 varieties of chocolate covered cherries, berries, and nuts as well as a host of sauces, baked goods, and Pacific Northwest gifts. Along the way, they've notched top awards such as Small Business of the Year from the Washington State Small Business Association, Outstanding Product Line from the Specialty Food Association, and Food Processor of the Year Silver from the Washington Manufacturing Awards.

Chukar's leadership over the past decades has included several other notable women. Chukar's Director of Operations, Kathleen Young, has been with the company for 24 years. Sales Manager Teresa Garcia has been a team leader for 20 years. Recently, Montgomery's daughter, Wynne Auld, joined the team as Marketing Manager. Founder Pam Montgomery emphasizes, "All of our team members at Chukar have an opportunity to succeed commensurate with their commitment and efforts. We are fortunate to have great leadership, and many of our executive leaders over the past decades have been women."

In the coming years, Chukar's goals include increasing customization so that customers can send gifts with a personal touch, expanding Chukar's retail experiences so that customers get a sense of the majesty of the Yakima Valley and the dedication and skill of local cherry growers, and taking active steps to reduce carbon emissions and move to plant based packaging. "We continue to expand our offerings of locally sourced, tree-ripened fruit and premium, craft chocolate. Our customers enjoy the unique flavors of the Northwest, best-in-class customer service, and goodies that are always made fresh, shipped fresh," assures Montgomery.

Chukar's cherry specialties can be purchased at their flagship store and factory headquarters in Prosser, at their store in the center of Seattle's Pike Place Market, or at [CHUKAR.COM](http://CHUKAR.COM).

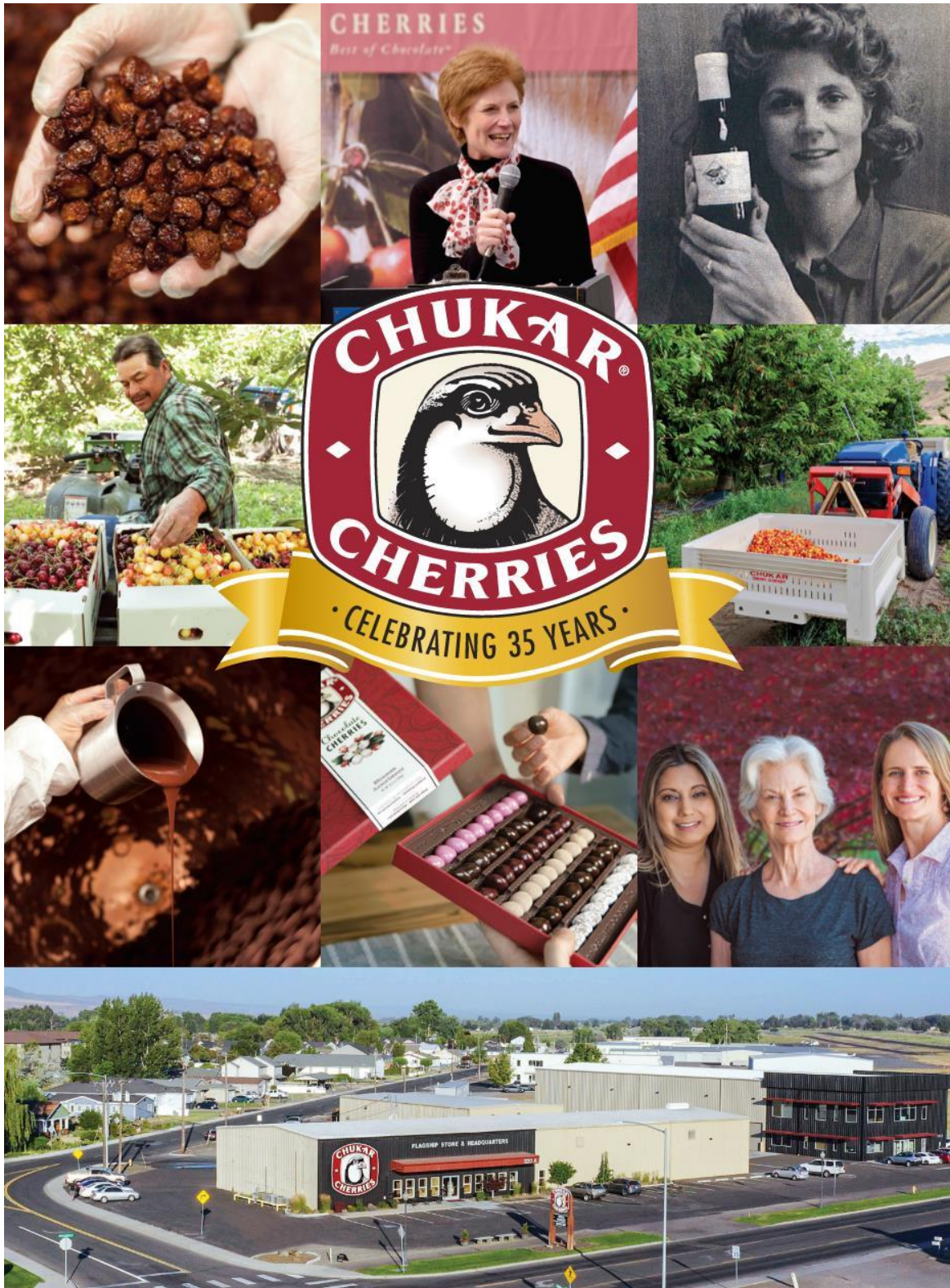
#### **About Chukar Cherries**

*Transforming local cherries into authentic Northwest goodies and gifts has been Chukar's specialty since the company launched on the Alexander-Auld orchard in central Washington's fruit lands in 1988. The family-owned business handcrafts its all-natural products using tree-ripened fruit, fresh roasted nuts, and premium chocolate.*

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Captions left to right, starting at the top left: Freshly dried Rainier cherries; Founder Pam Montgomery accepts Small Business of the Year Award from the Washington State Small Business Association; Chukar Cherries wins Outstanding Product Line from the Specialty Food Association; Local grower Juan Rubalcava inspects freshly-picked cherries; Yakima Valley cherry harvest; Crafting Chukar's chocolate cherries in old-world kettles; Chukar's best selling chocolate assortments; Sales Manager Teresa Garcia, Founder & CEO Pam Montgomery, and Marketing Manager Wynne Auld; Chukar's flagship store and factory headquarters in Prosser, Washington.