



Chukar Cherries Celebrates 35 Years at the Port of Benton Business Park
Business Park's First Tenants Continue to Grow and Serve Local Community

Prosser, WA, July 27th, 2023—This year Chukar Cherries celebrates 35 years in business. Since the company's inception in 1988, they've had the same location at the Port of Benton Prosser Airport Business Park in rural Prosser, WA. In fact, Chukar was the Business Park's first tenant.

It all started when Founder Pam Montgomery discovered that cherries from her family's orchard were delicious when dried naturally without sugar. She knew she was on to something; however, it quickly became clear that to dry cherries without preservatives or added sugar, she would need to become a vertically-integrated food manufacturer.

The prospect was daunting—besides knowledge and know-how, Chukar would need an expansive manufacturing kitchen, warehouse storage, offices, breakrooms, and a storefront to sell their goodies to the public.

Fortuitously, the Port of Benton was developing an incubator manufacturing facility on Wine Country Road in Prosser with the goal of creating value-added agriculture manufacturing jobs. Pam wrote a business plan that was accepted by the Port of Benton Commissioners. The Prosser Airport Business Park campus was slated for opening the summer of 1988 and Chukar Cherry Company, Inc. was launched. Since that time, Chukar has occupied the original building as well as a new warehouse built in 2007 and a new fulfillment center built in 2018—both constructed by the Port to support the expanding enterprise.



Image 1: Chukar Cherries ground-breaking ceremony with the Port of Benton in 1988

35 years later Chukar employs more than 60 full-time locals and processes nearly 500,000 pounds of Northwest cherries every year—transforming them into chocolate-covered cherries, *no sugar added* dried cherry and nut mixes, Northwest cherry gifts, and more. The company offers a secondary market to local growers due to their acceptance of smaller fruit so long as the cherries have been tree-ripened to ensure high natural sugar content. Finally, Chukar's economic impact has expanded to Washington State at-large; since the mid-90's Chukar has had a permanent stall in the center of Pike Place Market's main arcade, introducing millions of visitors a year to the unique flavor of Northwest cherries. Since the company is deeply involved in the Seattle community—Chukar will donate to the Pike Place Market Foundation and design a bronze hoofprint commemorating Chukar's 35th anniversary.

Chukar Cherries' Prosser headquarters is open for tastings daily, and locals and visitors alike are always welcome to come and savor their favorite treat or discover a new one.



Image 2: Chukar Cherries Flagship Store & Factory Headquarters today

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The History of Ports in Washington State

Ports have a fascinating history that is uniquely Pacific Northwest. The Port of Seattle, formed in 1911, was the first port in the United States. Over a century ago, as settlers migrated across the country, they often chose locations near water. Washington State was no different—with many deep harbors and navigable rivers, towns sprang up throughout the state, dependent on access to water for the movement of goods and people.

In 1889, the new state constitution declared that these navigable waters belonged to the people and gave the legislature power to designate which would become harbors. In 1911, the legislature passed the Port District Act, allowing the people to form a port district and elect commissioners to govern it. In September of 1911, the Port of Seattle was formed.

Since then, more than 80 port districts have formed in Washington, all contributing to the state's healthy trade economy. Currently, there are 75 public port districts in Washington. Large and small, east and west, Washington's ports are active in many areas of economic development, providing jobs and economic stimulus for their communities.

A port district's primary goal is economic development for its community, resulting in job creation, careers that pay a family wage, and community growth. Chukar is proud to be part of the Port of Benton and Washington's unique history.

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. Chukar's cherry specialties can be purchased at their flagship store and factory headquarters in Prosser, Washington, at their store in the center of Seattle's Pike Place Market, or at CHUKAR.COM.