



## 2019 NORTHWEST CHERRY SEASON FORECAST

### *Chukar Cherries Gears Up for a Busy Summer Drying Cherries*

*Prosser, WA, June 11<sup>th</sup>*—June is a heady time in eastern Washington as cherry harvest commences. Northwest Cherry Growers announced last week that they estimate regional orchards will bring 24.3 million 20-pound box equivalents to market. That figure is a bit of a drop from the May estimates, but still strong. Recent warm weather has growers optimistic that the flavor and quality of cherries will be excellent in 2019.

Cherry season peaks in July with the sweet morsels gracing grocery store shelves across the U.S. and the world. Washington is the nation's foremost producer of sweet cherries, with Oregon and California following it. Most cherries in Washington are grown in the Yakima Valley with Chukar's hometown of Prosser at the epicenter. During the 2019 season, Chukar will take in over 175 tons of fresh cherries from local growers they have partnered with for years. "We're gearing up for a big season" says Chukar's General Manager and Prosser native, Tim Oten. "The excitement is palpable as we visit area orchards—talking with growers and checking the fruit for firmness and sugar content."

While the hills surrounding Chukar's factory headquarters and flagship store are lined with vineyards, the valleys between are home to the world's premier cherry trees—most of which are owned by family farmers. In 1988 Chukar Cherries began on one of those very orchards—and it was watching unpicked cherries sweeten on the tree as they dried in the sun that inspired cherry grower Pam Montgomery to begin drying the cherries naturally. Studies at UC Davis concluded that drying cherries without added sugar or preservatives was not plausible, but Pam believed the natural sugars in tree-ripened cherries were enough. She developed her own natural drying process using a hand-built dehydrator that still dries cherries at Chukar's original manufacturing facility in Prosser today.

In addition to their other product lines, Chukar Cherries has recently expanded their organic offerings. The number of acres that have transitioned to organic production continues to rise, but organic cherries accounted for only about 3% of total production in 2018 according to the Washington State Tree Fruit Association. Partnering with several of these organic orchards, Chukar offers not only USDA Certified Organic dried sweet and tart cherries but also organic chocolate-covered cherries.

Chukar's organic offerings and Northwest gifts are available online at [CHUKAR.COM](http://CHUKAR.COM), at the company's flagship store in Prosser, in Seattle's Pike Place Market, and at a host of premier retailers.