

Cherry

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the festival afterward. Organizational meetings start in January with reviews of the festival plans in March and April.

One of the changes this year will be an appearance by the Blue Angels, the Navy's precision flying team. That will create a little disturbance, but nothing that can't be handled. In the wake of Sept. 11, security is always going to be tighter.

"They'll probably close down the Coast Guard base during the airshow," Soffredino said. "But other than that, not a lot has changed." One thing that definitely hasn't changed is the order of work during the Cherry Festival. As per previous years, city employees cannot take any day of that week off. He said there's little grumbling over that particular stricture because everyone knows the rule. In all, the city staff and the organizers get along very well during the proceedings.

"The city employees do a fantastic job of working with the cherry people," Soffredino said.

It's not just the city and the organizers working to bring the festival together. Hal Van Sumeren, president of the Traverse City Chamber of Commerce, said everyone's got their eggs in this basket.

"We (the chamber members) are going to be working to help the tourists, we're putting aside our other activities to handle them," he said. "Most of the work we do is done by volunteers, so there's going to be less time to spend on chamber activities."

And there may be even less time this year. He said the word on the wind this year is that a record crowd of cherry enthusiasts will be



Cherry delight: Cheesecake with fresh cherry syrup is one dessert you can expect to find at the Cherry Festival in Traverse City this week.

coming into town for the celebration. "This is the first major event of the summer season," Van Sumeren said. "It's going to be a spectacular crowd, probably the biggest in some time."

He said that AAA and other travel monitoring organizations have predicted that Traverse City and other northern Michigan destinations are going to have record crowds throughout the rest of the summer.

But all is not well in Traverse City. A strangely cold spring put a crimp on this year's crop, forcing

organizers to go elsewhere for the signature fruit.

"The crop was damaged," said National Cherry Festival spokesperson Susan Olson. "The cold spring and the wind hampered this year's growth."

Not to worry, though, help is on the way from other parts of the country. Olson said that because it is a national festival, part of an association that represents other cherry growing regions around the country, it's perfectly all right for cherries to be brought in from Yakima, Washington to cover the shortfall.

BY ALEX LUNDBERG
STAFF WRITER
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"It was inspired by a pie my father and I used to get at a restaurant called the Farmhouse in Hazel Park," Conrad said. "I did it to take my mind off my father who was in the hospital at the time."

The pie won out over 375 other recipes submitted from around the state. It is reprinted here by permission of Conrad.

CRUST:

2-1/2 cups all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon salt
1/2 lb. (two sticks) cold unsalted butter cut into

small pieces
iced water
1/4 cup finely grated sharp Pinconning cheese

Using a pastry blender, mix flour, salt and butter until ingredients look like a coarse-ground meal. For a short cut, mix in a food processor for 10 seconds. Add grated cheese. Gradually add drops of iced water and mix or pulse until dough holds together (approximately 1/4 cup). Pat the dough into a flat circle on a piece of plastic wrap. Cover with wrap and refrigerate for at least an hour.

CRUMB TOPPING:

1/4 lb. (one stick) cold unsalted butter cut into small pieces
1/2 cup all-purpose flour
3/4 cup dark brown sugar
1 cup rolled oats

Combine butter and flour with a pastry blender or in a food processor until mixture looks like coarse meal. Add brown sugar and oats and combine. Set aside.

FILLING:

2 eggs
1/2 cup granulated sugar
2 tablespoons flour
1 cup sour cream
1 teaspoon grated lemon rind
1 tablespoon lemon juice
1/2 cup dried cherries rehydrated in brandy for several hours then drained well
2 1/2 cups peeled, sliced Michigan Ida Red apples

Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Roll out pie crust to a 14-inch circle and press into a nine-inch pie plate or tin. Beat the eggs and add the sugar, flour, sour cream, lemon rind and juice. Add the cherries and apples then mix well. Pour into crust. Bring overhanging pastry up over the filling. Bake for 10 minutes. Remove from oven, sprinkle crumb topping on the apple filling and continue baking for 30 to 35 minutes, until crumb topping is brown and filling is set. Chill slightly before serving.

UNUSUAL CHERRY RECIPES

CHERRY BRUSCHETTA

1 can (21 ounces) cherry filling and topping
1/2 cup finely chopped red onion
1/2 teaspoon dried basil
1/2 teaspoon dried oregano
2 garlic cloves, minced
1/4 cup olive oil
1 pound loaf of French bread cut into 3/4 inch thick slices

In a medium saucepan, combine cherry filling, onion, basil and oregano; mix well. Cook, stirring constantly over medium heat five minutes or until mixture is bubbly and flavors are blended. Let cool to room temperature.

In a small bowl, combine, garlic and olive oil. Brush both sides of each bread slice with oil mixture; place on an ungreased baking sheet. Broil 4 to 5 inches from the heat, 1 to 2 minutes per side, or until golden brown.

Top each slice of bread with a generous tablespoon of cherry mixture. Serve immediately as an appetizer or first course.

Makes 8 servings.

SENSATIONAL STUFFED MUSHROOMS

30 large mushrooms about one pound
1/2 pound bulk pork sausage
1 cup chopped dried tart cherries
2 green onions, sliced
1 package (8 ounces) cream cheese, softened

Pull stems from mushrooms and discard mushroom stems. Rinse caps and drain well. Set aside.

In a large skillet, cook sausage, stirring to break up meat, 5 minutes, or until sausage is done. Remove from heat. Add dried cherries, onions and cream cheese; mix well. Fill each cap with heaping teaspoon of sausage mix. Place on lightly greased baking sheet. Bake in preheated oven at 425 for 8 to 10 minutes. Serve immediately. Makes 30.

LOW FAT GUSCIOUS SALAD

1 cup water
3/4 cup quick-cooking couscous, uncooked
1/2 cup dried tart cherries
1/2 cup coarsely chopped carrots
1/2 cup chopped cucumber

1/4 cup sliced green onions
1/4 cup toasted slivered almonds (optional)
3 tablespoons balsamic vinegar
1 tablespoon olive oil
1 tablespoon Dijon-style mustard
salt and pepper to taste

Bring water to boil in a medium saucepan; stir in couscous. Remove from heat, let stand covered for five minutes. Fluff with a fork. Uncover and cool for 10 minutes.

Put cooked couscous, dried cherries, carrots, cucumber, onions and almonds in a large mixing bowl and mix well. Combine vinegar, olive oil, and mustard; mix well. Pour over couscous mix, stirring to coat all ingredients. Season with salt and pepper. Serve chilled or at room temperature.

CHERRIES JUBILEE

1 can (16 ounces) dark sweet cherries
1 tablespoon cornstarch
1/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1/8 teaspoon ground nutmeg
2 to 4 tablespoons kirsch (cherry brandy) or brandy (optional)
Ice cream or pound cake

Drain cherry juice into a one-cup microwave-safe container. Set cherries aside. Add cornstarch, cinnamon and nutmeg to cherry juice. Stir until cornstarch is thoroughly dissolved.

Microwave juice mixture uncovered on HIGH for 1/2 to 2 minutes, stirring once, or until mixture is thickened and begins to boil.

Put drained cherries in a one-quart microwave-safe container. Pour thickened juice over cherries and mix well.

Microwave uncovered on high for 2 to 3 minutes or until cherries are heated thoroughly. Just before serving: In a small microwave safe container, microwave the kirsch 20-30 seconds. At the dinner table, pour hot kirsch over hot cherry mixture; carefully ignite. Stir, spooning sauce over cherries until flames subside.

Serve on ice cream or pound cake.
Makes 1 1/2 cups or 4 to 6 servings.

Courtesy of The Cherry Marketing Institute

— Compiled by Lana Mini



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Can you bake this cherry pie?

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— Compiled by Lana Mini

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