



Extremadura:

a source of fruit





The major environmental, economic and social transformation of Extremadura over the past fifty years is mainly the outcome of the Badajoz Plan, a central government policy to spread the availability of irrigation by building numerous dams and reservoirs.

Since the implementation of the Plan, Badajoz province has been endowed with 111,000 hectares of irrigated arable land, and Cáceres with 96,000 irrigated hectares.

The agricultural sector developed phenomenally in these years, especially in the past twenty, with an unprecedented increase in the output of high-quality stone and pip fruit. Extremadura is now in the leading pack of Europe's fruit-growing regions, with annual production of over 300,000 tonnes of stone and pip fruit.



Peach, nectarine, pear, plum and cherry are some of the most widespread crops. A standout is the Extremaduran plum, widely appreciated internationally for its quality of flavour and distinctive organoleptic properties. Work is in progress towards obtaining a protected geographic indication called Ciruela de Extremadura.

Of the 25,000 hectares devoted to stone and pip fruit in Extremadura, over 10,000 hectares are given over to cherry. Their quality has been assured for over a decade now by the protected designation of origin Cereza del Jerte, which in its annual campaigns on the international markets has won several prizes.



El Jerte cherries

In Extremadura, beyond the Duero basin, lies the town of Jerte, with its distinctive architecture and shaded alleyways, in northern Cáceres province, set in the beautiful Valley of Jerte, watered by the river of the same name.

The municipality of Jerte is blessed with outstandingly beautiful landscapes, such as the Garganta de los Infiernos, declared a nature reserve, with its stairway of rock-pools linked by crystal-clear waterfalls.

In the spring, the thousands of cherry trees that cover the hillsides offer an amazing spectacle when their naked branches put forth a mass of flowers, dressing the valley in white. This is one of the area's great tourist attractions. Tourism and cherry cultivation are the two mutually sustaining mainstays of the local economy.

In the summer, the growers hand-pick the El Jerte cherries, which are sold under the protected designation of origin Cereza del Jerte. The label exclusively covers fresh table cherries of exceptional quality. Jerte cherries are highly prized for their distinctive flavour, juiciness, firm pulp and nutritional properties. The high sugar content and fine balance of sweetness and acidity make flavour the Jerte cherry's

most striking distinctive quality. Depending on the variety, the cherries are red to wine-red in colour; some cherries have red pulp and juice, while in others the pulp is cream-coloured and the juice colourless.

The PDO-protected varieties are the outcome of clonal selections bred from local species and successive hybrids. Most are stalk-less cherries called picotas; they are slightly pointed in shape and readily detach from the stalk when picked. Picota cherries account for over three quarters of the local harvest, and are divided into the sub-varieties Ambrunés, Pico Negro, Pico Limón Negro and Pico Colorado. A stalked cherry variety, Navallinda, is also grown for its outstanding quality.

Freshly picked cherries are available in greengrocers from mid-June to early August.

The special features of the Jerte valley, coupled with traditional Extremaduran highland agriculture, have shaped a huge wood of large, vigorous cherry-trees which, every year, lend a touch of splendour to the valley and bring forth the peerless cherries of El Jerte...

www.cerezadeljerte.org



Fruta de Extremadura



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JUNTA DE EXTREMADURA