



EVENT ORGANIZING TOOLKIT

What is the Michigan Cherry Slurp?

The Michigan Cherry Slurp is a special event highlighting one of Michigan's most well-known agricultural products—cherries! Did you know that Michigan ranks first in the nation in the production of Montmorency tart cherries and fourth in the nation in the production of sweet cherries? That's just two of the reasons why cherries deserve celebration!

On Tuesday, February 14, 2017, Michigan institutions—schools, early childhood programs, hospitals, colleges/universities, and senior living facilities—along with organizations, businesses, and individuals celebrated the first Michigan Cherry Slurp! Now, each year we slurp a Michigan cherry blend smoothie or celebrate cherries another way: gobble a pie, munch a muffin, or chew on cherries in your salad bar. Any way you choose to celebrate, the week of Valentine's Day is a great time to feature Michigan cherries!

The Michigan Cherry Slurp highlights a Cultivate Michigan winter featured food—dried and frozen cherries—and is part of National Cherry Month. The Michigan Cherry Slurp is modeled on the Michigan Apple Crunch, a statewide event that started in 2011 in Muskegon County and expanded statewide in 2013. In 2015, 350,000 people crunched into a Michigan-grown apple on the same day, celebrating Michigan agriculture and supporting Michigan farmers. These initiatives support farm to institution and other local food purchasing initiatives.

Take the opportunity during Valentine's Day week to feature Michigan cherries. Share your event on social media with #micherryslurp!

TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL SLURP

Assemble a team

The best events are a result of collaborative team efforts, so make sure you're not going solo. Bring together food service staff, administrators, teachers, other nearby programs, parents, and even teachers to help plan your event. The more people involved, the bigger the event and the greater the impact.

Capture your efforts

Designate someone to take photos and videos on the day of to capture your event. Post photos and videos on social media throughout the week.

Tell your story

Share your event in your newsletter, on your website, in your local paper, with local politicians, and on social media. Let people know why you support Michigan agriculture!

Bring cherries into the classroom

Incorporate cherry and nutrition education, or ask a cherry farmer to come in to talk with students, staff, or other customers.

Planning Your Slurp

STEP 1: CHOOSE YOUR EVENT

While the Michigan Cherry Slurp was inspired by slurping a cherry smoothie, you can celebrate and enjoy cherries in many other ways. Michigan Farm to Freezer provides a Michigan Cherry Smoothie Blend in IQF (individually quick frozen) form. If you have blenders at your institution, you can blend this product with your juice or yogurt of choice and serve it in the cafeteria. You can also make your own smoothie blend with Michigan cherries or celebrate them in a different form. Frozen or dried cherries are also delicious in muffins, oatmeal, parfaits, and salads. See our [Cultivate Michigan Cherry Purchasing Guide](#) for more tips on how to use dried and frozen cherries.

Once you determine your event, decide where to celebrate.

In the cafeteria

Serve your cherry product on the lunch line and take pictures of customers enjoying cherries in the cafeteria.

In the classroom

Coordinate your Slurp over an intercom—have the principal or administrator count down over the loud speaker so everyone at the school slurps at once.

As a community

Bring all students, staff, and/or customers together to slurp at the same time in the same place. Organize your slurp with your regular fire drill so that everyone is in the same place. Have participants form the shape of a cherry in the snow.

GREAT IDEAS FROM THE MICHIGAN APPLE CRUNCH

Michigan has had a statewide Apple Crunch since 2013, and some great ideas have emerged out of that special event. Can you adapt them to your cherry celebration?

- Set a time to slurp throughout an institution or across an entire community or county.
- Take a creative picture with everyone in matching colored shirts.
- Have children color pictures of cherries to post all over the school, cafeteria, or dining area.
- Build in classroom activities around cherries—have students write cherry-themed poems, do cherry-themed word problems, or study the history of cherry production in Michigan.

STEP 2: FIND A SOURCE FOR YOUR CHERRY PRODUCT OF CHOICE

Whether you are working with a local farmer or through your regular purchasing channels, you can get some help finding out where to find and buy Michigan cherries from the resources below.

Cultivate Michigan

The Cultivate Michigan Cherry Purchasing Guide includes sourcing information and recipes. Find it here: cultivatemichigan.org/featured-foods/foods/cherries.

Check out the **Cultivate Michigan Sourcing** guide to find Michigan cherries and other local food products to purchase through broadline and specialty distributors: cultivatemichigan.org/featured-foods.

Michigan Farm to Freezer

The Michigan Farm to Freezer Smoothie Blend is a mix of products grown by Michigan farmers is sure to satisfy all your smoothie needs. Just blend with your favorite juice, milk, or yogurt and enjoy.

Cherry Capital Foods

Cherry Capital Foods' Farm to Cafeteria program is bringing the local farm-to-table movement to bigger tables. Since 2009, they have been connecting Michigan institutions with local farmers and producers to keep food dollars closer to home and put fresher, healthier food on more plates.

You can order the Michigan Farm to Freezer Cherry Smoothie blends through Cherry Capital Foods along with IQF sweet and tart cherries and dried cherries.

Cherry Marketing Institute

Learn all about U.S. Montmorency Tart Cherries at choosecherries.com.

TASTE TESTS PROMOTE POSITIVE EXPERIENCES

Taste tests provide a fun and memorable experience for kids to come to food on their own terms and be exposed to it in different forms.

They also allow food service staff to try new foods in different forms to see what students or customers like best.

Many resources are available that give guidance on conducting successful taste tests. A few are listed below.

Taste Testing Resources

Vermont FEED: Guide to Taste Testing Local Foods in Schools

vtfeed.org/resources/guide-taste-testing-local-foods-schools

Growing Minds: Farm to School Taste Tests in School Cafeterias

growing-minds.org/farm-to-school-taste-tests/

Georgia Organics: Bright Ideas for Taste Test Success

<https://vimeo.com/71532219>

Cherry Slurp Smoothie Recipes

Recipes provided by the United Dairy Industry of Michigan

Double Cherry Vanilla Smoothie

YIELD: 18 oz smoothie

- 1.5 cup (7.35 oz) whole sweet frozen cherries (provides 1 cup pureed fruit for School Meals)
- ¼ cup 100% cherry juice
- ½ cup (4 oz) low-fat vanilla yogurt
- ¼ cup 1% white milk

Combine all ingredients in a blender. Pulse until smooth. Pour into cups. Refrigerate until service. Hold for cold service at 41°F or below.

Provides 1¼ cup fruit juice, 1 oz meat alternate, and ¼ cup milk for the National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs.

QUANTITIES FOR GALLON BLENDER:

- 9 cups (44.1 oz) whole sweet frozen cherries
- 1½ cups 100% cherry juice
- 3 cups (12 oz) low-fat vanilla yogurt
- 1½ cups 1% white milk

Sweet & Tart Cherry Smoothie

YIELD: 14 oz smoothie

- ½ cup (2.4 oz) whole sweet frozen cherries
- ½ cup (2.35 oz) whole tart frozen cherries
- 1/3 cup 100% cherry juice
- ½ cup (4 oz) low-fat vanilla yogurt
- ¼ cup 1% white milk
- ½ tsp vanilla

Combine all ingredients in a blender. Pulse until smooth. Pour into cups. Refrigerate until service. Hold for cold service at 41°F or below.

Provides 1 cup fruit juice, 1 oz meat alternate, and ¼ cup milk for the National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs.

QUANTITIES FOR GALLON BLENDER:

- 3 cups (14.4 oz) whole sweet frozen cherries
- 3 cups (14.1 oz) whole tart frozen cherries
- 2 cups 100% cherry juice
- 3 cups (12 oz) low-fat vanilla yogurt
- 1½ cups 1% white milk
- 3 tsp vanilla

STEP 3: PROMOTE YOUR EVENT

There are many ways you can engage your community in celebrating cherries along with you!

- Invite local politicians and community leaders (see page 9 for a sample letter)
- Add a mention in your organizational newsletter
- Announce at school board or other community meeting
- Invite parent and/or employee participation
- Create flyers (see the graphics on page 7)
- Send a press release to local media outlets (see page 11 for a template)
- Social media posts (see sidebar for sample posts)

MICHIGAN CHERRY SLURP SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS

Copy, paste and adapt these social media posts to promote your Slurp. Pair them with photos of your staff using cherries, your delicious cherry treats, or the graphics we provide!

Facebook or Twitter

- Join us for the #micherryslurp on {DATE OF EVENT} to celebrate Michigan cherries and farm to school/institution!
- It's a cherry jubilee at {INSTITUTION NAME} on {DATE OF EVENT}! Celebrate the #micherryslurp
- #Drinkyourfruit! We're making cherry- smoothies for the #micherryslurp on {DATE OF EVENT}

Cherry Slurp Graphics

You can download these resources here: <https://bit.ly/2DXht7F>

CHERRY SLURP LOGO



SOCIAL GRAPHIC – CHERRY HEART



#MICHERRYSLURP

SOCIAL GRAPHIC – CHERRY MICHIGAN



February 14
#MICHERRYSLURP

SOCIAL GRAPHIC – I HEART MI CHERRIES



February 14
#MICHERRYSLURP

E-BANNER – CHERRY HEART



February 14

#MICHERRYSLURP

E-BANNER – CHERRY MICHIGAN



February 14

#MICHERRYSLURP

Invite Your Legislators

You can use the template below as a call script or letter to invite your legislators or other community leaders to your Cherry Slurp event. Copy and paste, then personalize all of the portions in **{BRACKETS}**, add any content specific to your event, and send it out to your local, state, and national legislators.

To find your elected officials, see these websites:

- U.S. Senate: senate.gov/senators/contact/senators_cfm.cfm?State=MI
- U.S. House of Representatives: house.gov/representatives#state-michigan
- Michigan State Senate: senate.michigan.gov/fysbyaddress.html
- Michigan State House of Representatives: house.mi.gov/MHRPublic/frmFindARep.aspx

{NAME}

{SCHOOL/ORGANIZATION}

{PHONE}

{EMAIL OR OTHER CONTACT}

{DATE}

Dear {SENATOR/REPRESENTATIVE LAST_NAME},

{TOWN/SCHOOL/INSTITUTION NAME} is joining schools, preschools, colleges, and individuals across Michigan in celebrating Michigan cherries by {INSERT ACTIVITY}. {TOWN/SCHOOL/INSTITUTION NAME} will source {CHERRY PRODUCT} from {CHERRY SOURCE} in celebration of the Michigan Cherry Slurp on {EXACT DATE OF YOUR EVENT}.

{PROVIDE A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF YOUR EVENT, ACTIVITIES, LOGISTICS, HOW PARENTS/ COMMUNITY CAN BE INVOLVED}

This collective “slurp” encourages healthy eating and supports farm to school and local food initiatives throughout Michigan. {DESCRIBE HOW IT CONNECTS LEARNING OR OTHER RELATED EFFORTS AT YOUR TOWN/SCHOOL/INSTITUTION}.

We would love to have you join our festivities. For more information, or to slurp with us, please contact {CONTACT NAME} at {CONTACT PHONE}.

We look forward to seeing you at this exciting local food event!

Sincerely,

{CONTACT NAME AND INFO}

STEP 4: CELEBRATE & SHARE YOUR STORY!

The Michigan Cherry Slurp is an opportunity to celebrate Michigan agriculture and your local food efforts, so make sure to celebrate loud and proud!

Below are a few ideas to get the word out.

- Let local newspaper and television reporters know about your Slurp by sending a press release or invitation to join your event. Use the celebration as a way to share more about your farm to school/institution programs!
- Get out your cameras, smartphones, or video devices and take lots of photos and videos to share through social media! Please note that any photos posted to the Michigan Cherry Slurp Facebook page may be used in future Michigan Cherry Slurp promotional material.
- Use the hashtag #micherryslurp to share your images on Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook.

IDEAS FOR PROMOTION

- Share your story with the local newspaper and television station, and/or through your other communication channels.
- Invite community members, farm to school/institution partners, or families to join in on the Slurp.
- Write a story for your institution's newsletter highlighting your event and share it on your website.
- Share pictures and videos on social media. There are some sample social media posts on page 6 that you can adapt for your organization's social media account. You can also post them to the Michigan Cherry Slurp Facebook page at facebook.com/MichiganCherrySlurp/.
- Visit the Michigan Cherry Slurp Facebook page at facebook.com/MichiganCherrySlurp/ to see the stories and photos roll in!

Press Release Template

Copy and paste this press release template into a new document. Then personalize all of the portions in **{BRACKETS}**, add any content specific to your event, and send it out to your local media and news outlets.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE CONTACT:

{NAME}

{SCHOOL/ORGANIZATION}

{PHONE}

{EMAIL OR OTHER CONTACT}

{TODAY'S DATE}

It's the first Michigan Cherry Slurp at **{TOWN/SCHOOL NAME}**!

{TOWN/SCHOOL NAME} is joining schools, preschools, colleges and individuals across Michigan in celebrating Michigan cherries by **{INSERT ACTIVITY}**. **{TOWN/SCHOOL NAME}** will source **{CHERRY PRODUCT}** from **{CHERRY SOURCE}** in celebration of the Michigan Cherry Slurp on **{EXACT DATE OF YOUR EVENT}**.

{PROVIDE A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF YOUR EVENT, ACTIVITIES, LOGISTICS, HOW PARENTS/ COMMUNITY CAN BE INVOLVED}.

This collective slurp encourages healthy eating and supports farm to school and local food initiatives throughout Michigan. **{DESCRIBE HOW IT CONNECTS LEARNING OR OTHER RELATED EFFORTS AT YOUR SCHOOL}**.

For more information, or to slurp with us, contact **{CONTACT NAME}** at **{CONTACT PHONE}**.

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