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News (/News)

Skylar Rae cherries to debut for Stemilt

By Tom Karst (/users/tomkarst) April 28, 2015 | 2:27 pm EDT

WENATCHEE, Wash. — Select buyers and consumers will get acquainted with Stemilt's trademarked Skylar Rae cherry this year, touted with the tag line "the sweetest cherry you'll ever eat."

The Skylar Rae is the brand name for a new bicolored variety (also called Tip Top) that will be packed and marketed exclusively by Stemilt in North America, according to Brianna Shales, communications manager for Stemilt Growers.

The Skylar Rae has a yellow-orange background but with a distinct red blush, Shales said.

The variety was discovered in 2002 by chance on a tree at the Toftness family's Tip Top Orchards located up Halverson Canyon in Wenatchee.



The variety was named to honor the memory of the daughter of Troy and Kim Toftness. The couple's daughter died from a genetic defect as an infant not long before the variety was discovered in the family's orchard, Shales said.

The rare chance variety could have parentage of sweetheart and rainier, but the parents are not absolutely known, she said.

"This is the sweetest cherry that we have, with 23 to 25 brix, significantly higher than dark sweets and even rainiers," she said.

Shales said the variety is also very firm, which is a rare attribute for a sweet variety.

The variety was recently awarded a Price Look-Up number, Shales said, representing the third stock-keeping unit in the cherry category. Volume is expected at about 18,000 cartons of conventional fruit this year, to increase in future years.

"We're planning on Skylar Rae to rival our rainier tonnage in three to five years," she said. "It will be a big variety here."

The variety likely be grown in other countries as well, Shales said.

Skylar Rae will be marketed in both in a 1.25-pound pouch bag and a new dome-style clamshell, Shales said. The 1-pound clamshell is similar in style to a dome package that cherry tomatoes have been marketed in. "The reason for that is to bring the product up, to elevate so it gets seen by the eye," he said. It will help that premium cherry stand out at the store.

About the Author:



Tom Karst

Tom Karst is national editor for The Packer and Farm Journal Media, covering issues of importance to the produce industry including immigration, farm policy and food safety. He began his career with The Packer in 1984 as one of the founding editors of ProNet, a pioneering electronic news service for the produce industry. Tom has also served as markets editor for The Packer and editor of Global Produce magazine, among other positions. Tom is also the main author of Fresh Talk, www.tinyurl.com/freshtalkblog, an industry blog that has been active since November 2006. Previous to coming to The Packer, Tom worked from 1982 to 1984 at Harris Electronic News, a farm videotext service based in Hutchinson, Kansas. Tom has a bachelor's degree in agricultural journalism from Kansas State University, Manhattan. He can be reached at tkarst@farmjournal.com and 913-438-0769. Find Tom's Twitter account at www.twitter.com/tckarst.

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