

# EUROPEAN CHERRY VARIETIES

## Evaluated and Considered

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The following varieties were investigated and evaluated on my sabbatical in 2000. Although additional evaluation was made on Regina and Attika I did not include a further review of these two cherries, since they are currently under review by both scientists and growers in the Pacific Northwest.

**Bigalise:** A variety from Delbard of France with Stark Hardy Giant parentage. Bigalise ripens about five days before Van. It is very large in size averaging 30-32 mm (9 row plus). It produces a light crop and it is a light red cherry, which at first is not uniformly red. It has very good firmness, similar to Lapins but is sensitive to rain although not as sensitive as Garnet.

**Crystal Champaign:** A selection from Marvin Niece in California. A large cherry, 24 to 26 mm in size (10 row). When I tasted this cherry in Spain it was crunchy firm showing minimal cracking after a number of light to moderate rains. A very blocky cherry with nice shiny skin which gives a nice finish. It ripens after Prime Giant (see below) but before Ruby. It has very good flavor. The pit is medium to large. This one may be worth checking out.



Crystal Champaign

**Durone III:** Flowering time is very late. It is susceptible to bacterial canker. It is a very large cherry but a very poor cropper and so probably not of interest to us.

**Earlese:** Ripens four days before Burlat but is larger than Burlat, with good, sweet-tart flavor. Earlese blooms early, 4-5 days before Burlat. Ruby and Prime Giant are pollinizers. Although gaining popularity in Europe I believe it is too soft for our markets so it is probably not worth pursuing.

**Fercer:** A French cherry that I have heard about for a number of years and some felt was promising. Dr. Valerie Simard of the La Tapy Provincial Research Station in Provence, France, however, has given up on Fercer due to low productivity and sensitivity to cracking.

**Fernier:** This cherry has good flavor with a little less acid than Van but overall a better quality cherry than Van. Fernier has large fruit, 26 to 28 mm in size (10 to 9 ½ row). The tree grows very vigorously and is a moderate cropper. The fruit has some tolerance to rain. However, the cherry ripens just 2-3 days after Van (Bing timing) so probably not of great interest to us.

**Giorgia:** This is an Italian cherry that we have been looking at for some time. I saw it in Spain and Italy. In Spain it ripens about 7 days ahead of Van (or Bing). A 10 row plus cherry with very good firmness and good productivity, however, in Italy it was somewhat watery and medium soft. In Italy it was a 9 to 9 ½ row cherry. It has dark red flesh and skin. The flavor was a good sweet-acidic flavor. Due to conflicting firmness levels, it is too early to make a decision on this one.

**Karina:** A sister to Regina, also from the Jork Research Station near Hamburg. According to the Italians it has much better yield than Regina. A very good cherry with good firmness but there is a slight nose dimple that makes it more sensitive to splitting. Martin Balmer from the Ahrweiler, Germany Research Station commented that the cherry had very good fruit quality with good flavor but in his area it was not a good cropper. Again, conflicting reports makes it difficult to accurately evaluate this variety. It is a very upright tree. Since it ripens with Kordia (Attika) the Germans are recommending Kordia, for this time period, instead of Karina because of the productivity issue. This was a cherry that I was very excited about after seeing it in 1997.

**Margit:** In Italy I was told this was a good cherry but had poor productivity. In Italy it ripens 7-8 days after Burlat, so it may be earlier than Chelan; however, in Norway it looked a day or two later than Chelan. In Germany, the cherry was 10 row in size and very firm. It had a white to red flesh and red skin with a very small stone. It has an excellent sweet-acid flavor. This looks to be a very good cherry except for the question of productivity. In Germany some growers had removed Margit from their orchards due to production problems. Margit was said to be significantly less productive than Regina, even on Weiroot 154 and 158. Tobias Vogel said that once the tree matures production increases and he feels that it is worth waiting for. I saw trees in their seventh leaf that were grown on Weiroot rootstock that had cropped well for the very first time. Cherries on these trees showed some cracking but were very firm.

**Picota Varieties:** This is a group of four varieties, collectively known as “Picota”. These cherries are grown in the Jerte Valley of Spain and are distinctive for two reasons. First, and most importantly, they are unique due to the fact that they are marketed as stemless cherries. Sixty percent of all Picota cherries are marketed in the sophisticated markets of England and Germany. However, grower return for the Picotas are significantly lower than other cherry varieties. For example, mid-season Van’s return \$0.80/lb while the Picotas receive only \$0.53/lb. They are marketed under the name Picota in ½ kg clam shells and are quite attractive on the market shelf.

The second reason for their distinctiveness is their late ripening date. All four are very late ripening varieties. The earliest is harvested with Sweetheart while the others are all later. Ambrunés is the largest of the four varieties and probably



Picota Ambrunés

the best quality. Those that I purchased in England were 10 row and very firm. The shape was round, although the other varieties are all cordate. The skin of Ambrunés was dark mahogany and the flavor was sweet but somewhat flat.

**Prime Giant:** This cherry ripens with Brooks about 7-10 days after Burlat. It is very firm and large and has an excellent, sweet-tart taste. Seven days before harvest this cherry had a much stronger and better flavor than a ripe Burlat. Sugars and flavor are produced early, before the cherry is ripe. Marvin Niece in California developed prime Giant. I thought this was a good cherry but I have two major concerns about this cherry. First, it is susceptible to rain cracking, and second, trees in Europe had a virus that was killing the trees. It needs to be cleaned up before it is of interest, but otherwise a great looking cherry.



Prime Giant on bottom, Burlat on top

**Techlovan:** Along with Kordia this cherry is from the Czech Republic and is a large cherry, bigger than Kordia, with a potential size of 12 grams (9 row). It seems to ripen just ahead of Lapins. At the Ahrweiler, Germany Research Station it was a very large cherry with good firmness. It was similar to Van in cracking susceptibility. We currently have it in our GRC plot here in The Dalles so it is worth keeping an eye on it.

**Vera:** This is a medium to late ripening cherry from Hungary. It is self-fertile with a good sweet-acid flavor. The cherry is firm but not crunchy. Both the flesh and skin are red. Vera produces a heavy crop each year but the cherry splits in light rain and so it is probably not interesting.

### **New Releases from Professor, Dr. Sansavini in Italy**

**Early Star:** this cherry has very poor precocity. It is self-fertile and flowers heavily once it starts to produce, but generally a large fruit drop reduces the yield substantially and so overall it is not very productive. As the name implies, Early Star is an early ripening cherry, ripening a few days after Burlat. The fruit is large, generally 10 ½ to 9 ½ row in size. The cherry is not very flavorful but has a strong acid taste. Firmness is medium to firm. Flesh is white, skin is red to dark red.

**Blaze Star:** Another early cherry, but 12 to 14 days later than Burlat. Parents are Lapins x Durone Nero II. Blaze Star is an 8 gram cherry of only moderate size, and needs to be pruned hard to encourage fruit size. It is tolerant to rain. It had a good flavor, but somewhat watery and only medium soft in firmness. It is probably not very interesting due to its size and firmness.

**LaLa Star:** Sweetheart timing. Good firmness with a very good sweet-acid flavor. Mahogany red skin and red flesh. LaLa Star is rain tolerant. A very good cherry except for the fact that it is too small. Fruit were 11 to 11 ½ row. If fruit were two sizes larger this would be a tremendous cherry.