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Quality parameters, total phenolic content and antioxidant activity in different maturation stages of 'Sweetheart' cherry

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The cherry fruit is considered a nutrient dense food with a relatively low caloric content and a significant amount of important nutrients and bioactive food components. Nowadays there are some investigations regarding on nutritional and antioxidant properties of cherries. The objective of this study was to determine the stages of maturation of Sweetheart cherry from Cova da Beira (Portugal). Physicochemical parameters: firmness, color (L^* , a^* and b^*), soluble solids content (SSC), pH, titratable acidity (TA), total phenolic content (Folin-Ciocalteu reagent method) and antioxidant activity (DPPH method) of 'Sweetheart' cherry were evaluated. Three maturation stages were identified and results demonstrated that solid soluble content, phenolic compounds and antioxidant activity increase with ripening stages. For soluble solids content and total phenolic content cherries showed the following average values: 19.9, 20.5 and 22.0 ° Brix and 591, 788 and 810 mg galic acid kg^{-1} , respectively.

We can consider that this cultivar has an interest in nutritional terms, which may contribute to the enhancement of 'Sweetheart' cherry from the Cova da Beira region. Additionally, these data provide complementary information which can be used to ensure the quality of this regional product, 'Cereja da Cova da Beira'.