



WISCONSIN'S CRANBERRY HARVEST ~ FALL 2007

Wisconsin continues to be a national leader in cranberry farming and produces more than 50% of the cranberries that Americans consume each year. Cranberries are an important part of the state and local economies providing jobs and income for residents in both rural and urban areas.

Cranberries have long been Wisconsin's number one fruit crop. Some 240 growers in 18 counties in central, northern and western Wisconsin continue the tradition of cultivating this unique fruit, maintaining an agricultural heritage that began in the mid-1800s. Some marshes in the state have been successfully producing a crop for more than 100 years. Growers have a strong commitment to the land, local communities and their families, and receive great satisfaction from working the land and providing a food crop that people all over the world enjoy.

One of only a few native North American fruits, the cranberry is grown in low lying areas where the soil has an acidic nature and there is an abundant supply of water and sand. Water is used for irrigation, frost protection, winter flooding for weather protection, and harvesting. Sand is used as part of cultural practices to rejuvenate vines, encourage new rooting and fruiting upright growth. Although it may take three to five years for a new cranberry bed to produce a large enough crop for harvest, vines will continue to produce a crop for several decades.

Contrary to popular belief, cranberries do not grow in water. The low-growing, perennial vines blossom in late June or early July. Honeybees assist in pollination and small green berries are evident by early August. The cranberry matures until fall harvest when beds are flooded and the crimson berries are dislodged by mechanical harvesters and floated to the surface.

Fruit to be sold fresh is harvested using a mechanical rake to gently remove it from the vine. It is transported to warehouses where it is sorted and stored for use during the holiday season. Berries used for processed products are floated on the water, removed and taken to plants where they are cleaned and frozen for processing.

While Wisconsin cranberry marshes occupy more than 180,000 acres, cranberries are actually harvested on only about 18,000 of those acres. The balance, called support land, consists of natural and man-made wetlands, woodlands and uplands.

This support land is not directly used for crop growing, however, its network of ditches, dikes, dams and reservoirs is necessary to ensure an adequate water supply. Since this land is relatively inaccessible, it provides an ideal refuge for wildlife and valuable habitat where plant and animal life flourish.

These natural wetlands help to control flooding as well as filter and recycle water. Growers protect and manage these areas as part of their normal farming practices. As a result, cranberry marshes are familiar territory to rare and endangered species. Bald eagles, calypso orchids, sandhill cranes, trumpeter swans, loons, ospreys, wolves and other wildlife flourish on cranberry marshes in the state.

HEALTH BENEFITS

Cranberries offer several important health benefits. Not only are they a healthy, low-calorie, fiber-rich fruit, but they also help prevent urinary tract infections and possibly heart disease, certain types of cancer and other types of infections.

- Several studies have confirmed that cranberries can play an important role in urinary tract health. In fact, the National Kidney Foundation recommends one large glass of cranberry juice a day to maintain good kidney health.
- Results of medical research suggest that cranberries may be beneficial in the prevention of ulcers, which are linked to stomach cancer and acid reflux disease.
- Cranberries minimize the formation of dental plaque, which is a leading cause of gum disease.
- Ongoing research continues to suggest that cranberries may offer a natural defense against atherosclerosis, which is a primary cause of cardiovascular disease.
- Cranberries contain hippuric acid, which has antibacterial effects on the body, as well as natural antibiotic ingredients.
- Studies have supported the role of naturally occurring anticancer agents in fruits and vegetables. Recent studies have shown that these compounds found in cranberries help protect cells from damage that may contribute to certain types of cancer.

Although more research is needed to understand the role cranberries may play in preventing certain types of cancer, the National Cancer Institute does recommend eating at least five to nine servings of fruits and vegetables a day. Cranberries fit nicely into this important dietary recommendation. For more information on the health benefits of cranberries visit: www.cranberryinstitute.org.



COOKING WITH CRANBERRIES

You will find fresh cranberries available in your supermarket produce section in the fall. While cranberries are in season, it's a good idea to buy extra bags for later use. Just put them in the freezer and enjoy fresh cranberry recipes year 'round! Cranberries freeze well for up to a year. Just pop them right in your freezer for later use (wash in cold water before you use them, but not before freezing). When ready to use, do not thaw. Follow the recipe directions using frozen berries in place of fresh berries.

Winning Recipes from the 2007 Wisconsin State Fair – Creative Cranberry Cooking Contest

Cranberry Spinach Salad with Cranberry Dressing – Carla Radewahn, Wauwatosa, WI

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| 1 (10 oz) pkg. baby spinach | ½ tsp salt |
| ¾ cup sweetened dried cranberries | ½ tsp ground mustard |
| 2 green onions, sliced | ¼ tsp onion powder |
| 1 (11 oz) can mandarin oranges | ¼ cup orange juice |
| ½ cup fresh cranberries | ½ cup oil |
| 1/3 cup sugar | ½ cup toasted silvered almonds |
| ¼ cup red wine vinegar | |

In a large bowl, toss together spinach, dried cranberries, green onions, and mandarin oranges. In blender, combine cranberries, sugar, vinegar, salt, mustard, onion powder and orange juice. Gradually blend in oil until emulsified. Pour over salad. Sprinkle with almonds.

Harvest Oat Cranberry Muffins – Noreen Buczek, Forestville, WI

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| 3 cups flour | 2 cups sliced cranberries |
| 2 cups oatmeal | ½ cup butter or margarine, melted |
| 1-1/2 cups brown sugar | 1-1/2 cup milk |
| 2 Tbls baking powder | ½ cup sour cream |
| 1 tsp cinnamon | 3 eggs |
| Topping: (mix together) | |
| ½ cup flour | ½ cup sugar |
| ½ cup oatmeal | 4 Tbls melted butter or margarine |

Preheat oven to 425 degrees. Mix the dry ingredients in a large bowl. Mix the wet ingredients in a separate bowl. Add the wet mixture to the dry ingredients and fold together gently. DO NOT BEAT. Fill lightly greased or lined muffin tins and sprinkle on topping. Bake 18 minutes.

CRANBERRY FUN FACTS

- Wisconsin is expected to be the top cranberry-producing state in the nation for the 13th consecutive year, producing more than 50% of the country's crop. The 5 major states cranberries are grown in are: Wisconsin, Massachusetts, Oregon, New Jersey and Washington.
- The cranberry was officially named Wisconsin's state fruit on April 5, 2004.
- The first cranberry marshes in the state date back to the 1830s, even before Wisconsin was a state.
- Only three major fruits are native to North America - the cranberry, blueberry and Concord grape.
- American recipes containing cranberries date from the early 18th century. Legend has it that Pilgrims may have served cranberries at the first Thanksgiving in Plymouth. Today cranberries are an ingredient in approximately 700-800 products throughout the world.
- In early times, cranberries were shipped to market in wooden barrels, transported by train. Each barrel weighed 100 pounds. Although many years have passed since cranberries were shipped in barrels, this unit of weight remains the industry standard.
- If you strung together all the cranberries harvested in 2006, they would stretch from Green Bay, WI to Glendale, AZ, 1,116 times.
- Wisconsin's 2007 projected cranberry harvest of 3.9 million barrels of fruit equates to 187 cranberries for every Web blog in the world. that's a lot of bog for your blog.