



Food Safety & Nutrition

Cranberries – The Holiday Fruit



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Cranberries are sometimes referred to as the holiday fruit because fresh cranberries are only available during the months of October through early January. They are bright red in color and their tart flavor enhances holiday meats and baked goods.

Fresh cranberries are usually sold in 12-ounce bags (3 cups of whole berries).

When selecting cranberries, the berries should be brightly colored and fully red or yellowish-red with a smooth, firm glossy skin. If the berries are soft and wrinkled they should be discarded. Fresh berries can be stored in the original packages in the refrigerator crisper for up to 4 weeks.

Cranberries can be considered one of the more versatile fruits available. About 70% of the cranberries harvested are processed into a juice, juice blend or juice concentrate. Cranberry sauces are another popular way to serve cranberries and available year around. Over the past few years, dried cranberries have become an alternative to raisins. They provide a unique red color to baked products, salads, main dishes and desserts. Dried cranberries also make a good snack.

Cranberries are high in vitamin C. A cup of raw cranberries provides one fifth of the daily Vitamin C required. Studies have also show that cranberries have large amounts of antioxidants and bacteria-blocking compounds that may protect against heart disease, certain types of cancer and ulcers, gum disease and promoting urinary tract health. Current research indicates that approximately 10 ounces of cranberry juice cocktail is needed daily to achieve the bacteria blocking benefits. In place of cranberry juice you could also substitute 1 ½ cups fresh cranberries, 1 oz dried cranberries. or ½ cup cranberry sauce.

If you want to preserve the fresh cranberries to be able to use them year around you can freeze them, can them, make sauce, dry them or make them into salsa, chutneys or preserves.

To freeze cranberries choose firm, deep-red berries with glossy skins. Wash and drain them well. Freeze them on a tray before packing into freezer containers or pack into containers and freeze. For best quality use them within one year.

To can cranberries wash and remove stems from cranberries. Make a heavy syrup by heating 5 cups of water with 3 ¾ cups of sugar. Bring this to a boil. Carefully add cranberries to the boiling syrup. Boil for 3 minutes. Put fruit into hot pint or half-pint jars, leaving ½ inch headspace. Cover with boiling syrup. Remove the air bubbles and wipe rims with a damp cloth. Process pint or half-pint jars in a boiling water bath canner for 15 minutes.

Below are some recipes on how to dry cranberries, and how to make a salsa or chutney. For more recipes using cranberries try these websites: www.oceanspray.com; or www.cranberries.org or contact Sandy Brown at the WSU Extension office in Brush Prairie.

Spicy Cranberry Salsa

Yield: About 6 pint jars

6 cups chopped red onion	4 finely chopped large Serrano peppers
1 ½ cups water	1 ½ cups cider vinegar
1 tablespoon canning salt	1 1/3 cups sugar
6 tablespoons cover honey	12 cups (2 ¾ pounds) rinsed, fresh whole cranberries

1. Wash and rinse 6 pint canning jars; keep hot until ready to use. Prepare lids according to manufacturer's directions.
2. Combine all ingredients except cranberries in a large Dutch oven or saucepan. Bring to a boil over high heat; reduce heat slightly and boil gently for 5 minutes.
3. Add cranberries, reduce heat slightly and simmer mixture for 20 minutes, stirring occasionally to prevent scorching.
4. Pour the hot mixture into clean, hot pint jars, leaving ¼ inch headspace. Leave saucepot over low heat while filling jars. Remove air bubbles and adjust headspace if needed. Wipe rims of jars with a dampened clean paper towel; apply two-piece metal canning lids.
5. Process in a boiling water canner for 10 minutes.
6. When processing time is complete take them out of canner and let cool undisturbed for 12-24 hours and check for seals.

Cranberry Conserve

Yields 4 half-pint jars

1 unpeeled, finely chopped orange	1 cup water
3 cups sugar	1 quart cranberries washed
½ cup seedless raisins	½ cup chopped nuts

1. Combine orange and water; cook rapidly until peel is tender (about 20 minutes).
 2. Add cranberries, sugar and raisins. Bring slowly to boiling, stirring occasionally until sugar dissolves.
 3. Cook rapidly almost to the jelling point of 220 F (about 8 minutes) As mixture thickens, stir frequently to prevent sticking.
 4. Add nuts during the last 5 minutes of cooking.
 5. Pour into hot jars leaving 1/2 inch headspace. Wipe rims of jars with dampened clean paper towel.
 6. Apply two-piece metal canning lids.
 7. Process in Boiling Water Canner for 10 minutes.
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Dried Cranberries

1 (12 oz) bag of cranberries

2 quarts boiling water

¼ cup sugar or corn syrup

1. In a bowl, pour boiling water over the cranberries or submerge them in a pot of boiling water with the heat turned off. Let them sit in the water until the skins pop. Do not let the berries boil or the flesh will turn mushy.
 2. Drain well.
 3. If desired, coat the berries with either the light corn syrup or granulated sugar.
 4. Transfer the berries to a cooking sheet and place them in a freezer for 2 hours. Freezing the berries helps in breaking down the cell structure promoting faster drying. Put the berries on a mesh sheet in the dehydrator and dry for 10-16 hours, depending on the make of the dehydrator. Dry until chewy and with no pockets of moisture.
 5. Store dried cranberries in the freezer in portion size packages.
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