



CRANBERRIES

**Ingredient
of the Month**



Presented by ACFEF Chef & Child Foundation

Cranberries grow on low, creeping shrubs or vines in areas where the soil has an acidic nature, such as in moors or bogs. The flowers are dark pink that turn into small, red berries that are tart in flavor. Small pockets of air inside the ripened fruit enable it to bounce and float in water. In winter, growers flood the bogs with water to freeze and insulate the vines from frost. They are drained in spring to flower and become pollinated and then flooded again for harvest time.

Cranberries are harvested in the fall, usually from October until December. Fresh cranberries sold as whole berries are dry harvested with a mechanical picker. Cranberries used in processed foods are picked using a wet-harvest process where cranberry beds are flooded. A water reel loosens the berries from the vines so they float to the surface to be collected.

Cranberries are one of only three fruits native to North America. Native Americans mixed mashed cranberries with deer meat to make a survival food that kept for long periods of time called pemmican. They also used the berry for medicinal purposes to draw poison from arrow wounds. The rich, red juice was used as a natural dye for rugs, blankets and clothing. Today, about 95 percent of cranberries are processed into products such as juice and sauce. The remaining five percent are sold fresh.

Cranberries are a low-calorie, fiber-rich fruit that are high in antioxidants for optimum health. The antioxidant compounds help protect against tooth decay, urinary tract infections and inflammatory diseases. Cranberries contain oxalic acid which may crystallize as oxalate-stones in the urinary tract in some individuals.

Healthy Ingredient Contribution

Values from NutritionData.com based on one cup cranberries, raw, whole.

ANTIOXIDANTS: Cranberries are high in substances that have antioxidant properties. Antioxidants protect against free radicals that cause aging, cancer and disease and help support memory function and coordination.

DIETARY FIBER: Cranberries are a good source of soluble and insoluble fiber, containing 18 percent of the daily recommended value. Soluble fibers help control weight by making the stomach feel full. Insoluble fibers add bulk to the diet and help prevent constipation.

MANGANESE: One serving of cranberries contains 18 percent of the daily recommended value of manganese. This mineral is needed to produce enzymes that help improve the metabolism of proteins and fats. It also works with vitamin K to help keep bones strong.

VITAMIN E: Cranberries provide 6 percent of the daily recommended value of vitamin E. This fat-soluble vitamin strengthens the immune system widens blood vessels, which helps reduce the risk of blood clots.

VITAMIN K: One serving of cranberries has 6 percent of the daily recommended value of vitamin K, which helps anchor calcium inside bones and prevents osteoporosis. It is also essential for blood clotting.

Types and Varieties

NORTHERN CRANBERRY, or common cranberry, is found in the cool temperate northern hemisphere. The flowers are dark pink on hairy stems, and the fruit is a small, pink berry with a sharp acidic flavor.

AMERICAN CRANBERRY is native to northern North America across Canada with slightly larger leaves than the northern cranberry. It has a slightly apple-like taste.

MOUNTAIN CRANBERRY, also known as lingonberry, is bright red to dark red and has a strong acidic taste. It is found in the boreal forest and Arctic tundra in Eurasia and North America and ripens in late summer to autumn.

There are more than 100 varieties of cranberries that grow in North America, including Early Blacks and Howes.

- **Early Blacks** are the first berries to harvest in September with a sweeter taste and intense red color.
- **Howes** produce bigger, firmer, tart berries that store well. They can be sliced and still hold their berry shape.

Selection and Buying

Choose berries that are bright red, plump and firm to the touch. The skin should be intact and free from wrinkles. Avoid fruit that is mushy or wet.

Fresh cranberries can be stored in the refrigerator for up to a month. They have a shorter shelf life if kept at room temperature. Cranberries freeze well and can be kept for to 9-12 months.

Wash berries in cold water just prior to use. Do not thaw frozen cranberries.

Culinary Uses

- The more sugar used in cooking cranberries, the tougher their skin will be. Cook only until they pop to avoid bitterness.
- Add fresh or dried cranberries to salads for an extra nutrition boost.
- Mix dried cranberries with nuts for a colorful, healthy trailmix.
- Combine with other fruits, such as oranges or apples, to balance their extreme tartness.
- Sprinkle over hot oatmeal or ice-cream and add to muffins and breads instead of raisins.
- Cranberry sauce is used in traditional poultry dishes.

Fun Facts

- Legend has it that the Pilgrims may have served cranberries at the first Thanksgiving in 1621 in Plymouth, Mass.
- Americans consume about 400 million pounds of cranberries each year. About 20 percent are eaten during Thanksgiving week.
- Cranberry vines can survive indefinitely. Some vines in Cape Cod are more than 150 years old.
- The cranberry was declared Wisconsin's official state fruit in 2004.
- German and Dutch settlers called the fruit "crane berry" because they thought the cranberry blossom looked like the head of a crane.
- Small pockets of air inside the fruit enable it to bounce, as well as float in water.



CHEF & CHILD
foundation
AMERICAN CULINARY
FEDERATION

AMERICAN CULINARY FEDERATION
180 Center Place Way
St. Augustine, FL 32095
800.624.9458 | www.acfchefs.org