



## Cranberries - A Great Fruit All Year Long

The Cranberry is a nutrition powerhouse that is versatile and goes well with many different foods throughout the year.

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Source: USDA

When I was growing up, Thanksgiving was always one of my favorite days of the year because it would bring aunts, uncles, and cousins from miles away right to my house. Dinner was a massive feast of turkey, dressing, gravy, sweet potatoes and rolls. Additionally, nothing would usher in comforting feelings of that fall holiday meal like a can of cranberry sauce. Ruby red,

sweet and delicious. The perfect small side to accompany the meal. Fast forward a few years and now I find myself responsible for orchestrating the family Thanksgiving meal. I have learned over the years that there is more to cranberries than the canned sauce.

Cranberries are a nutrition powerhouse that are versatile and go well with many different foods. The United States Department of Agriculture and the University of Maine report that cranberries are rich in antioxidants such as Vitamin C, flavonoids which can reduce the risk of cancer, and phenols which fight heart disease and cancer. Cranberries are also rich in fiber and other substances that protect our bodies against problems like urinary track infections. Antioxidants are compounds found in plant-based foods such as cranberries and other berries. Antioxidants help

prevent or stop cell damage. Fresh and dried cranberries work well in baked dishes. They can also be added to vegetable dishes and salads. When shopping for cranberries remember that they can be found in a wide range of colors from light to dark red. Look for berries that are plump, glossy, and firm. Avoid berries that are shriveled, soft or decaying. Fresh cranberries are in season October through early January.

Store cranberries in the original packaging or a tightly sealed plastic bag for up to two months in the refrigerator crisper. Pick through the berries and remove any that are soft or decaying. Rinse the berries before you use them. The National Center for Home Food Preservation has directions for canning homemade cranberry sauce using fresh cranberries. Visit the [center's website](#) for directions. Purchase fresh cranberries while they are in season and freeze them for use during the year. Freezing cranberries is simple because they can remain in the original plastic packaging or I recommend transferring them to freezer bags for longer protection. They will last for an entire year in the freezer and do not require thawing before use.

If you have never tried a fresh cranberry, the taste is very tart. Most people add cranberries to recipes instead of eating them alone. Tartness deepens in red cranberries as they ripen. White cranberries are used more for juice and are not usually sold fresh.

The University of Maine Extension offers these creative ways to use cranberries:

- Add cranberries to a variety of dishes including quick breads, salads, relishes, salsas and chutneys. Imagine adding cranberries to grain-based entrees and desserts. Cranberries can add an exciting touch to a favorite banana bread or apple muffin recipe.
- Dried cranberries are now a popular addition to salad bars because they are delicious with leafy green and spinach salads. Cook dried cranberries in pilaf recipes or stuffing.
- Make a delicious cranberry mustard that can be used with pork or salmon. Simply heat some whole-berry cranberry sauce with just a little honey, then mix in an equal amount of your favorite brown or Dijon-style mustard. Finally add a dash of ground ginger.

Be inspired to add good-for-you cranberries to everyday meals. They are great during the holidays, but even better during the year.

## Cranberry Chutney

## Ingredients

- 1 cup raw cranberries
- 1 cup water
- 2 tablespoons Splenda or Stevia
- ½ teaspoon ground ginger
- ½ teaspoon cinnamon
- ½ teaspoon ground cloves
- ¼ cup finely chopped onion
- ¼ cup finely chopped celery
- 1 medium apple, peeled and chopped

## Directions

Rinse cranberries, apple, celery and onion under running water before preparing. Simmer all ingredients except apple in saucepan for 15 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add chopped apple and cook for an additional 5 to 10 minutes. Cool. Serve with turkey, fish, or pork.

**Note:** This is a tart chutney. To increase sweetness, add additional Splenda.

## Nutrition Facts

Servings per Recipe: 5 servings, 1 serving = ¼ cup. Amount Per Serving: Calories 30; Calories from Fat 0; Total Fat 0 g; Cholesterol 0 mg; Sodium 11 mg; Carbohydrate 8 g; Dietary Fiber 2.5 g; Protein 0.5 g; Exchange free Carbohydrate Units 0

*Recipe provided by the University of Illinois Extension*