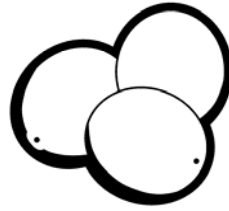


NOVEMBER – Featured Fruit: CRANBERRIES



WASH. COOK. EAT.

(how easy is that?)

Cranberry plants have drooping, pink flowers, and small, sour, seedy fruit. Cranberries remain tart, even after they ripen, unlike other fruits. The difference is that as most fruit ripens in the wild, it relies on animals to disperse the seeds. The fruit has to tempt animals – and to taste good, it has to be sweet. Cranberries, however, don't need animals to spread their seeds. They grow naturally along the banks of streams, where ripe berries can simply plop into the water and float off to a new location.

Facts

The name cranberry was given to this plant because the Pilgrims believed the plant looked like the head of a sandhill crane and was originally named "craneberry." Over time, the "e" was dropped.

About 95 percent of cranberries are processed into products such as juice, sauce, and sweetened dried cranberries. The remaining 5 percent is sold fresh to consumers.

Cranberries grow on vines in boggy areas. Flooding protects the vines from frosts and freezing weather and destroys insect pests.

Most cranberries are harvested by machine, but machines damage the berry. Damaged berries are not suitable to sell fresh but work well for juices, jellies, and other products. More than one-third of the cranberries grown in the United States are made into juice. Fresh whole berries may be purchased, but are often expensive because they have to be hand-picked to avoid the damage caused by machine-picking.

Cranberries are also called bounceberries, because they bounce when ripe.

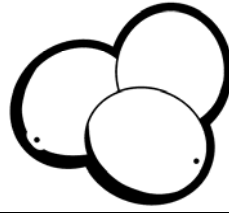
History

Cranberries were first cultivated in Massachusetts around 1815 and are only one of three major native North American fruits. Some cranberry beds have been around for over 100 years.

Native Americans used cranberries for both their medicinal and natural preservative powers. They brewed cranberry mixtures to draw poison from arrow wounds. They also pounded cranberries into a paste and mixed the paste with dried meat to extend the life of the meat.

Source: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cranberry>

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Where Grown

The small, or European, cranberry grows wild in marshlands of temperate and colder regions of Europe and North America. The large, or American, cranberry is cultivated in the northeastern United States in sand-covered bogs that can be flooded or drained at will.

Most of the U.S. cranberry crop is grown in only five states: Massachusetts, Wisconsin, New Jersey, Oregon, and Washington. Each year, more than 110,000 metric tons of cranberries are produced in the United States.

Types

There are four major varieties of cranberries: European, American, Mountain, and Highbush.

American - This variety is the most common in the United States. The U.S. Department of Agriculture uses this variety as the standard for fresh cranberries and cranberries used for juice. This variety is bright red.

European - This variety is smaller than the American and is eaten less often than other varieties. It is primarily ornamental.

Mountain - This variety is approximately ¼ to ½ inch in diameter and is bright red to dark red. It is occasionally found in markets.

Highbush

This variety is primarily used for jellies, jams, and sauces. It is also used as an ornamental fruit.

Nutrients

- Fresh cranberries are a good source of vitamin C
- Fresh cranberries contain bio-flavonoids, plant pigments with antioxidant properties