



Canadian Cranberries

A Tart Treasure



Cranberries are native to Canada's Atlantic provinces, where they grow wild and are sometimes known as "marsh apples." They have become big business in several Canadian provinces—Canada, in fact, is the world's second-largest producer of this tart red fruit. Cranberries were a favourite food of Canadian Aboriginal bands living in the Atlantic region, since the berries could be eaten fresh, mixed with maple syrup to produce a sweet sauce or pounded with meat to prepare the dried staple called pemmican.

Cranberry plants are evergreen vines that prefer wet soil, preferably made up of sand and peat, which is why the fields are traditionally called "cranberry bogs." They need a carefully controlled water supply, both for irrigation and for the flooding technique used to harvest them, so Canada's growers use a combination of traditional and advanced techniques to manage their cranberry bogs and produce top-quality fruit.



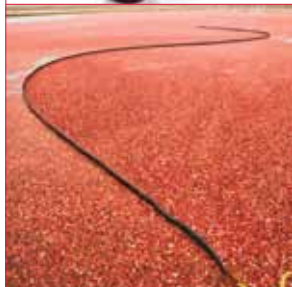
Canadian cranberries are harvested in early to mid-autumn, when they have ripened to a glossy, deep red. Berries that are to be sold fresh are harvested dry, using a machine that combs the berries off the vines. To harvest cranberries for processing, however, the grower floods the bog to a depth of several inches and a mechanical beater knocks the berries into the water; as they float, they are pumped into trucks for transport to the processing plant.

A health-promoting delicacy

Canadian cranberries are sold fresh, frozen and dried, or are processed into juice or sauce. They can be refrigerated for several months without losing quality, and when frozen will retain their tart, clean taste for up to a year.



Cranberry juice makes a refreshing drink, and dried, sweetened cranberries are a delicious ingredient in baked goods, nutrition bars, trail mixes, snack mixes, cereals and muesli. In the kitchen, chefs use them in dishes such as cranberry-sweet potato soup, cranberry-glazed baked ham, pork tenderloin with cranberry-hazelnut stuffing, and cranberry-hazelnut coffee cake. They are the key ingredient in traditional cranberry sauce, whose distinctive savour is the perfect complement to the roast turkey served at Canadian Thanksgiving dinners.





But there is more to cranberries than taste and versatility. Aboriginal Canadians knew that they had medicinal properties, and recent research indicates that the powerful phytochemicals contained in these berries may provide a remarkable range of health benefits. Cranberries, for example, contain chemicals that prevent the adhesion of bacteria to cell walls, which may help defend against the organisms that cause stomach ulcers and gum disease; probably for this reason, cranberries have long been a recognized treatment for urinary tract infections. Cranberries may also improve cardiovascular health by reducing blood-cholesterol levels, and their anti-inflammatory properties may be a factor in promoting overall health.

Quality and care

Canada's abundant supply of pure water and fertile soil means that all our fruits and berries, including cranberries, grow in clean, healthy conditions. Because of our cool climate, our cranberry producers need only small amounts of pesticides to produce a bountiful crop, and they watch pest populations very carefully to ensure that they apply the minimum necessary quantities of pesticides. Canadian cranberries are also monitored by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA), which ensures that they comply with grading, packaging and labelling regulations.

Taste the Canadian difference

The tart savour of cranberries is a taste like no other, and Canadian cranberries can add distinction to many kinds of dishes. For further information about this remarkable fruit and Canada's cranberry industry, please visit:

Government websites

- Agri-Food Trade Service
www.ats-sea.agr.gc.ca
- Canadian Food Inspection Agency
www.inspection.gc.ca

Industry websites

- Atoka Cranberries
www.atoka.qc.ca
- BC Cranberry Marketing Commission
www.bccranberries.com
- British Columbia Cranberry Growers Association
www.bccranberrygrowers.com
- Fruit d'Or
www.fruit-dor.ca
- Ocean Spray Canada
www.oceanspray.ca

