

It's Cranberry Month— Eat them fresh, juiced and dried

Happy Thanksgiving! I'm sure you'll all be out and about this weekend buying up all kinds of goodies to serve on your Thanksgiving table and I'm sure that many of you will be serving cranberries in some shape or form.

October is also cranberry harvest month—so perhaps a good time to tout the fabulous properties that this little powerhouse of a berry provides! The information that I'm providing today comes from the Cranberry Institute, a not-for-profit organization founded in 1951 to further the success of Canadian and United States cranberry industries through research and education. For more information on cranberries or the Cranberry Institute go to www.cranberryinstitute.org

Cranberries are farmed on approximately 40,000 acres across Canada and northern U.S. alone. That is a lot of cranberries! The most common method of harvest (which I have never actually seen, but Gerry has and says it is fascinating) is the wet harvest. The cranberries beds are flooded and the fruit is 'beaten' off the vine. The fruit then floats to the surface and is gathered for delivery.

A diet high in antioxidants is thought to help with disease prevention and cranberries are loaded with them. Cranberries have been shown to contain more antioxidant phenols than 19 other commonly eaten fruits.

The Cranberry Institute claims that cranberries have the ability to inhibit the adhesion of bacteria and hence the subsequent reproduction required for infection. Therefore they claim that by incorporating the cranberry into your diet you can help prevent such problems as urinary tract infections, peptic ulcers, periodontal disease, heart disease and cancer. Now, I am not a doctor, so I do suggest that for more detailed information you consult the Cranberry Institute website and your physician.

**Lori
Gysel
&
Gerry
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However, I am a cook and I can tell you that one of the problems in trying to incorporate more cranberries into your diet is that cranberries are often used in sweet dishes and I would suspect that although the addition of the cranberries to your diet can be helpful, the addition of great amounts of additional sugar will not be helpful at all! So how can you get the good without the

bad?

Dried cranberries, which are naturally sweet are wonderful when added to hot or cold cereals (I am a particular fan of dried cranberries added to my Red River cereal in the morning!). Dried cranberries are also great when added to salads.

Cranberry juice is delicious, but again, you have to watch out for the sugar intake. So, you can cut your cranberry juice with water or put plenty of ice cubes in the glass. When you are out for a 'drink' after work and you can't drink because you are driving, how about a cranberry and soda—much better choice than straight pop.

Fresh cranberries added to homemade apple sauce is a real hit at my house. Just peel and chop the apples, throw in a bunch of cranberries, a bit of cinnamon, a bit of water and put on the stove on low. Once the apples and cranberries have started to break down, add a bit of sugar—start with a small amount and taste as you go so that you don't make it too sweet. Fresh cranberries can also be added to chicken pot pie (assuming you are making it from scratch).

And for Thanksgiving, instead of cranberry sauce or jelly—try a cranberry salsa, using fresh cranberries, orange, raisins, honey, ginger and hot peppers. Have fun and keep cooking!

(Lori and Gerry can be reached at whatscookin@independentfreepress.com)

Apple Pecan Tarts with Maple Cranberry Sauce

Ingredients for tarts

- 1 cup pecan halves
- 2 tbsp flour
- 2 medium cooking apples, peeled, cored and grated
- 1 1/2 cups cranberry sauce
- 2 tbsp butter softened
- 1 tbsp brown sugar
- 16 3-inch tart shells uncooked

Ingredients for sauce

- 1 cup cranberry sauce
- 1/2 cup butter
- 1/3 cup pure maple syrup
- 1/4 cup water

Method

Toast pecans in 325 F degree oven for approximately 15 minutes. Reserve 16 for garnish, then coarsely chop the rest.

Mix together the chopped pecans, flour and apples. Mix in the cranberry sauce, butter and brown sugar. Mix well.

Place about 2 tsp of the apple mixture in each tart shell. Bake tarts in a 375 F degree oven for 35-40 minutes, until crust is golden brown. Cool before removing from the pan.

To make the sauce: simmer together the cranberry sauce, butter, maple syrup and water for 5 minutes, stirring frequently. Puree in a food processor and strain to remove any skins and seeds.

Just before serving, spoon the warmed sauce onto dessert plates. Place one warmed tart on each plate. Garnish with a pecan half.



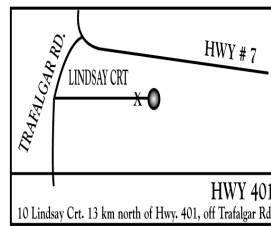
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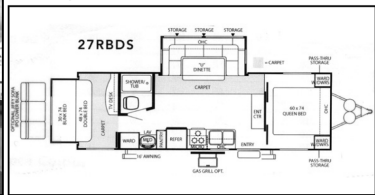
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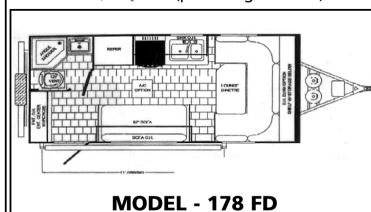
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