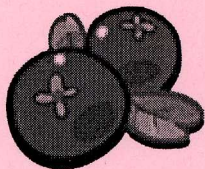


Fruits of Fall : Cranberries

DECEMBER 2015



It's fall again and the holidays are just around the corner. Take a look at your local grocery store and note the various types of Fall produce available – pumpkins, squash, sweet potatoes, and bright red and juicy cranberries!

Cranberries pack a nutritional punch and are loaded with phytochemicals, Vitamin C, and fiber says county Extension Agent Lorrie Coop. In fact, a half cup serving of fresh cranberries contains only 20 calories but has 2 grams of fiber and counts towards the recommended two cups of fruit we should eat every day. Dried cranberries are also a great choice and $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of dried is equivalent to $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of fresh fruit. In addition to their nutritional benefits, research, although not conclusive, suggests that cranberries may help prevent urinary tract infections.

Most cranberries are sold at your local grocery store in prepackaged 12 ounce plastic bags. Cranberries do not ripen after harvest. When selecting, choose cranberries that are shiny, plump, and range in color from bright light red to dark red. Shriveled berries or those with brown spots should be avoided.

Once you are home, store fresh cranberries in a sealed plastic bag in the refrigerator and consume as soon as possible. Fresh cranberries may also be frozen for later use notes Coop. To freeze, first check the fruits and throw out any soft ones. Next, wash and drain well. Place in an airtight freezer proof bag and freeze for up to one year. Frozen cranberries do not need to be thawed before use.

For most people, cranberries are too tart to be eaten raw and must be cooked. Cook cranberries only until they pop. Overcooking gives cranberries a bitter taste. Since cranberries are nearly 90% water, do not thaw before cooking them. Thawing will result in soft cranberries. Try adding fresh cranberries to muffins or prepare a cranberry sauce. An easy recipe for fresh cranberry sauce is 2 cups of cranberries, 1 cup of sugar, and $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of water. Wash and sort the berries and place all ingredients in a saucepan. Bring berries to a boil, stirring frequently to dissolve all of the sugar. Boil gently for 10 minutes or so, or until the berries pop and their skins crack. Remove from heat and skim the foam. Serve this favorite holiday sauce hot or cold.

Sweetening fresh cranberries to cut the tart flavor is another option for preparation says Coop. To avoid adding lots of sugar, try mixing with fruits like apples, oranges, or apricots that have lots of natural sweetness. For example, try a fresh cranberry orange relish. Combine 1 pound of chopped cranberries with 1 pound of chopped oranges. Add 1 cup of sugar and mix well. Store covered in the fridge. You could even try this recipe with $\frac{1}{2}$ sugar and $\frac{1}{2}$ sweetener to reduce the

LORRIE COOP, CEA-FCS
PO BOX 22 BENJAMIN, TX 79505
940-459-2651

TEXAS A&M
AGRI LIFE
EXTENSION