

Color Your Holidays a Zesty Cranberry

Tallahassee Democrat

Sylvia V. Davis, Extension Agent, University of Georgia Cooperative Extension--Baker/Mitchell Counties
Extension Service—Family & Consumer Sciences

Cranberries for the Holidays

Cranberries play a major role in Christmas holiday meals, and now is the time of year when fresh cranberries are most plentiful. Fresh cranberries are high in fiber and low in calories, with one-half cup having 27 calories. Make cranberries part of your healthy diet, they are a cholesterol, fat free and low sodium fruit providing a good source of vitamin C.

Cranberries and cranberry products contain the highest levels of antioxidants which help support the body's immune system. It has been long known that cranberries help maintain a healthy urinary tract. Research suggests that cranberries have properties that protect our bodies from certain types of bacteria causing gum disease and stomach ulcers.

Fresh cranberries vary in size, shape and color according to the variety. Look for bright colored berries that are plump, dry, and firm when buying cranberries, avoid soft and shriveled berries. Compare prices of fresh and canned cranberries to find the better buy. Remember, one pound of fresh berries will yield 12-14 one-fourth cup servings of cranberry sauce and a one-pound can of sauce yields eight one-fourth cup servings.

Cranberries can be stored in their original wrapping or in any closed container in the refrigerator for two to four weeks due to their natural acidity. Don't put cold cranberries in a warm place, the temperature difference will cause them to sweat, which hastens decay. Cranberries can be frozen up to nine months (do not wash them before freezing); wash frozen cranberries before using and do not thaw before adding to your recipe use them as you would fresh berries.

Fresh cranberries are easy to prepare. Simply wash in cold water and use whole or cut up in sauces, cakes, salads, or cookies. Canned cranberry sauce is available for use as is or in cooking. Canned cranberry sauce comes in the jellied or whole berry styles.

You can decorate with cranberries too! Did you know that cranberries float? For a beautiful display for any table, put a few cranberries and a few sprigs of cedar in a clear glass container, add a white floating candle and it is absolutely gorgeous. You can also float cranberries and other fruit like sliced lemons in a punch bowl.

Wild Rice Cranberry Apple Stuffing

1 tablespoon olive oil
2 stalks celery, diced (about 2/3 cup)
1 medium apple, diced (about 1 cup)
1 clove garlic, minced (optional)
Pinch of dried thyme
Pinch of dried sage (optional)
1 cup hot, cooked wild rice
1 cup hot, cooked brown rice
1/2 cup orange juice
1/2 cup sweetened, dried cranberries
1/4 cup sliced green onion (green tops only)
Salt & pepper to taste

In a large saucepan, heat olive oil over medium-high heat. Add celery, apple and garlic and sauté until softened, about 5 minutes.

Reduce heat to medium-low and stir in thyme and sage. Cook a few seconds and stir in hot rice, orange juice and cranberries; cook until heated through, about 1 minute. Just before serving, stir in green onion tops and season with salt and pepper.

Makes 8 1/2-cup servings.

Fluffy Fruit Salad

1 can (20oz) unsweetened pineapple tidbits, drained

1 can (16 oz) whole berry cranberry sauce

1 can (11 oz) mandarin oranges, drained

1 carton (8 oz) light, whipped topping

In a bowl, combine pineapple, cranberry sauce and oranges. Fold in whipped topping and orange peel. Serve on bed of lettuce if desired. Garnish with pecans just before serving. Keep refrigerated until served.

If you have a question, write to Sylvia V. Davis, Family and Consumer Science Extension Agent, University of Georgia Cooperative Extension- Baker County, P.O. Box 220, Newton, GA 39870 or call the Extension office (229)734-3015, weekdays between 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

University of Georgia Cooperative Extension – Baker/Mitchell Counties Extension is an Equal Employment Opportunity/Affirmative Action Employer authorized to provide research, educational information and other services only to individuals and institutions that function without regard to race, color, gender, disability or national origin.