



Fruits for Health the Pyramid Way

Cranberries

Nellie Hedstrom
Extension Nutrition Specialist

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Because of the vitamin C content of cranberries, captains of the early sailing ships supplied their sailors with cranberries to prevent scurvy.

The tangy cranberry has grown wild on low vines in marshy areas in Maine for centuries. Not until recently has the Maine cranberry been cultivated and become a commercial crop. The Pilgrims called it a "craneberry" because the fruit's blossom in late spring reminded them of a crane. Soon it was changed to cranberry, as we know it today. The bright, tangy berry piques any food it is in, whether it's a sauce, relish or muffins.

Nutrition Information

Because of the vitamin C content of cranberries, captains of the early sailing ships supplied their sailors with cranberries to prevent scurvy. The amount of vitamin C in one cup of raw cranberries is about one fourth of the current Recommended Dietary Allowance for an adult. Even so, it adds substantially to the day's intake of vitamin C, a water-soluble vitamin. Many processed foods made with cranberries, such as juices and drinks, add vitamin C to the product, resulting in the full daily requirement of vitamin C. Other nutrients, including vitamin A and potassium are also found in cranberries. Cranberries are also a good source of fiber. Making a gelled sauce or jams and jellies is easy.

Another use for cranberry juice is as a cure for urinary tract infections in

women. Medical research studies disclaimed the efficacy of the treatment in the past. Only more recently have studies indicated that the use of cranberry juice is useful in the prevention and treatment of urinary tract infections by preventing bacteria from sticking to the lining of the urinary tract.

Selection

A large percentage of the annual cranberry crop is used in processed foods. About 10 percent of the crop is available in the fresh produce section of your market from late September to January. Look for them prepackaged in 12-ounce or one-pound plastic bags. Plump, firm, bright berries are best.

Storage

Store cranberries in the crisper section of the refrigerator for up to four weeks. If you don't plan to use them right away, keep them in the plastic bag in which they were purchased. Cranberries can be stored in your freezer for up to a year. To freeze, check berries and discard any soft ones. Drain them well after washing and put in a moisture- and vapor-proof bag or container and freeze. This is one fruit that needs no processing before freezer storage. Use them from the freezer as you would fresh cranberries.

When storing cooked cranberries and raw relish, cover them to prevent drying and absorbing odors from other foods.

Cranberry sauce is easy to make and will be a hit any time of the year.

Preparation

Cranberries are a versatile fruit. They can be used as an appetizer, beverage, with a main dish or in breads and desserts. The tangy flavor may need a sweetener to make them acceptable to most. To avoid sugar, try mixing cranberries with other fruits that have natural sweetness, such as apples, oranges or apricots. Cooking cranberries in the syrup from canned fruit, such as pears or peaches, is another choice. Serve the sauce and berries with the fruit.

Mix equal parts of fresh cranberries and apples that have been peeled and cored to make cranberry applesauce. Fresh cranberries added to apple pie filling create a tangy taste sensation.

Grinding or processing together one pound fresh cranberries and one unpeeled orange and mixing in one cup sugar makes a traditional orange-berry relish. This tasty relish will keep in the refrigerator for up to two weeks.

Cranberry sauce is easy to make and will be a hit any time of year. The Thanksgiving table is never without it. Try making and serving your own rather than looking for the canned version. The standard proportion for sweet cranberry sauce is two cups fresh cranberries to one cup sugar to 1/2 cup water. After the cranberries have been sorted and washed, put the ingredients in a saucepan and boil gently for 10 minutes or until the skins pop. Remove from heat, skim and

serve hot, or allow to cool first. The sauce can be served gelled. After cooking pour into a serving dish and set to cool. Another version features 1 cup of raisins soaked in cold water in place of 1/2 cup sugar.

Molded Cranberry Salad

This colorful cranberry salad will be a hit at any dinner, and is great for the heart health-conscious people. The percent of calories from fat is less than one percent.

Serves 12

- 3 cups fresh cranberries, sorted, washed and drained
- 1 cup water
- 1 cup sugar
- 3 envelopes unflavored gelatin
- 2 cups orange juice
- 1 cup diced celery
- 1 cup shredded carrots
- 1/2 cup raisins
- 1 cup apples, peeled and chopped

Combine cranberries, water and sugar in a large saucepan. Bring to a boil and simmer for 5 minutes. In a small bowl, sprinkle the gelatin in the orange juice, and when the gelatin is softened, add it to the hot cranberry mixture. Cool the mixture. Chill it until it becomes slightly thickened.

Fold in the celery, carrots, raisins and apples. Pour the mixture into a 6-cup ring mold that has been sprayed with baking spray. Chill until the salad is firm. Serve by inverting on a serving platter and garnish.

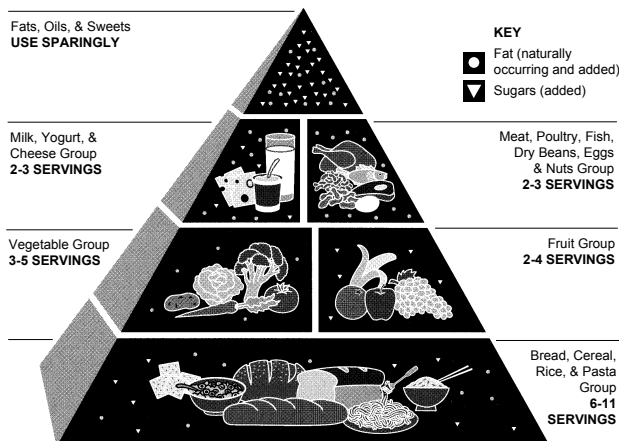
Nutritional content per serving:

124 calories	2 g protein
0 g fat	1 g fiber
27 mg vitamin C	0.4 mg iron
14 mg calcium	0 mg cholesterol
11 mg sodium	

Peer Reviewers: Kathy Savoie, Extension educator, Cumberland County, and David Handley, Extension vegetable/small fruit specialist

Food Guide Pyramid

A Guide to Daily Food Choices



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