

Lincoln County Homemakers' News and Clues

November ~ 2008

Jane Newton

County Extension Agent-Family and Consumer Sciences

Cranberries: Fruit of the Holidays



Today, fresh cranberries rarely pass our lips for 10 months of the year. We may eat canned jellied cranberry sauce, cranberry juice, or dried sweetened cranberries, but not the wonderful, tart, fresh cranberry.

Cranberries contain about 25 calories in $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of fresh berries and 10% of the recommended daily allowance of vitamin C, plus plenty of natural antioxidants. Fresh cranberries contain no cholesterol, virtually no fat, and very little sodium.

The American cranberry is native to North America and grows wild from Canada as far south as the mountains in North Carolina and Arkansas. Cranberries are cultivated commercially only in Canada and five states: Massachusetts, New Jersey, and Wisconsin - where the berry is native; and Washington and Oregon, where cranberries were introduced from Massachusetts.

Fresh whole berries are more expensive because they have to be hand-picked to avoid the damage caused by machine-picking. Select shiny, plump berries that may range in color from bright light red to dark red. Wash cranberries by gently rubbing them under running tap water. Discard shriveled berries or those with brown spots. Good, ripe cranberries will bounce, which is why they are nicknamed *bounceberries*.

Fresh cranberries should be stored in a tightly sealed plastic bag in the refrigerator. As with all berries, if one starts getting soft and decaying, the others will quickly soften and decay also. Be sure to sort out the soft ones if you plan to store them for more than a few days.

Fresh cranberries may last from 2 weeks up to 2 months in the refrigerator. Cooked cranberries can last up to a month in a covered container in the refrigerator. Washed cranberries may be frozen for up to 1 year in airtight bags. You can substitute sweetened dried cranberries for fresh or frozen cranberries in baked recipes.

Remember, whole fresh cranberries and any foods that are hard, round or difficult to chew can sometimes lodge in small airways, causing a child to choke. Before serving cranberries to a child under three years of age, always chop the raw berry or cook them until they are tender.

This holiday season take advantage of these wonderful fresh berries in the produce aisle! Make cranberries your fruit for the holidays!



University of Arkansas, United States Department of Agriculture and County Governments Cooperating.

The Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service offers its programs to all eligible persons regardless of race, color, national origin, religion, gender, age, disability, marital or veteran status, or any other legally protected status, and is an Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Employer.

The Pilgrims' Menu

Most of us are familiar with the story of the Pilgrims, who sailed to this country aboard the Mayflower in 1620 and how they held a Thanksgiving feast because after a brutal first winter in this new country, the fall harvest had been bountiful.



Surprisingly, foods that are considered staples of our Thanksgiving feasts today did not appear on the pilgrims' table.

Ham: There is no evidence that the colonists had butchered a pig by this time, although they did bring pigs with them from England.

Sweet potatoes were not commonly grown at the time of the Pilgrims' first feast.

Cranberry sauce: The colonists had cranberries but no sugar.

Pumpkin pie was not a recipe that existed yet though the pilgrims had recipes for stewed pumpkin.

Chicken and eggs: We know that the colonists brought hens with them from England, but it's unknown how many they had left at this point or whether the hens were still laying.

Milk: No cows had been aboard the Mayflower, though it's possible that the colonists used goat's milk to make cheese.

We do know that at the first Thanksgiving feast the Pilgrims would have had:

Seafood: Cod, eel, clams, and lobster were plentiful since the Pilgrims lived along the coast.

Wild fowl: Wild turkey, goose, duck, crane, swan, partridge, and eagles were plentiful in the forests.

Meat: Venison from the forests and seal from the ocean.

Vegetables: Pumpkins, peas, beans, onions, lettuce, radishes, and carrots were grown in their gardens.

Fruits: Plums and grapes were available.

Nuts: Walnuts, chestnuts, and acorns were also available.

(Adapted from Kathleen Curtin, Food Historian- Plimoth Plantation)

Turkey-Time Safety

It's time for the Thanksgiving turkey again! Let's keep it safe.



Thaw your turkey in the refrigerator, microwave, or submerged in a sink filled with cold water for maximum safety.

- In the microwave, check your owner's manual for the size turkey that will fit in your microwave oven, the minutes per pound, and power level to use for thawing.
- In the refrigerator allow approximately 24 hours for every 4 to 5 pounds.
- In the sink filled with cold water allow approximately 30 minutes per pound. Change the water every half hour.

Use soap and warm water to wash everything that is touched by raw turkey.

Roast the turkey until the temperature is 165°F as measured with a food thermometer. Check the internal temperature in the innermost part of the thigh and wing and the thickest part of the breast.

Keep cold foods cold and hot foods hot. If dinner is delayed, make sure that foods are kept at temperatures below 40°F or above 140°F.

Enjoy dinner, but don't forget to refrigerate leftovers within 2 hours. Refrigerate or freeze in covered shallow containers for quicker cooling.

Be sure to eat leftovers within 2 to 4 days, freeze them, or throw them away. Use gravy within 1 to 2 days.

Happy Thanksgiving!

Jane Newton

County Extension Agent-Family and Consumer Sciences
Lincoln County Cooperative Extension Service

113 West Wiley

Star City, AR 71667

870-628-4247

jnewton@uaex.edu