

PENNY SAVER NEWS

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Cranberry Toothpaste Anyone?

The holidays are over, the season is done, it's hard to find fresh cranberries in the store. Is your tongue wishing for another burst of cranberry flavor? Fresh cranberries are one of our most seasonal fruits, only available from September to December. Once the bogs are harvested there won't be another crop until next fall. But if their potential health benefits prove true, we might be seeing cranberries in a lot of forms other than the can-shaped blob of jelly beside the turkey.

Natural cranberries are much too sour to eat alone. They must be sweetened with sugar or with fruit juice concentrate. Now there's at least one cranberry juice on the market that's sweetened with a low calorie sweetener. We can have the flavor without the extra added calories.

Native Americans ate cranberries with honey or maple syrup to sweeten their sourness. They taught the early settlers to use them in puddings and with other fruits. But long before we started drinking juice for urinary infections, they pounded the berries into mush and packed them over wounds to help speed healing, prevent infections and stop bleeding.

Fresh cranberries contain vitamin C, which might be what promotes healing. But the berries are super-high in antioxidants, which together with the vitamin C can prevent infections. Cranberries are also very, very high in benzoic acid, a natural preservative. It's the reason they don't spoil as fast as other berries.

In cranberries the antioxidants are mainly from a group of pigments responsible

for the bright red and purplish color of the berries. Besides providing such pretty color, these antioxidants prevent *E. coli* from sticking to the lining of our bladders. That's how they protect us from urinary infections. Drinks with at least 25% cranberry juice are most effective.

Of course if they can help us get rid of some bacteria, they might do the same thing for other bacteria as well. That thought is what has led researchers to look for more health benefits, and may lead to more cranberries in our diets.

For starters, how about cranberry flavored toothpaste? Or would you prefer bright red cranberry mouthwash? The children might like it for Halloween, but your teeth might enjoy it year-round. Dentists have been measuring how many and how fast bacteria grow on teeth when washed with drinks that are at least 25% cranberry juice. Whether it's the antioxidants or benzoic acid, something in the juice kills bacteria.

Other research suggests that antioxidants in cranberries could be a big help for people who suffer from stomach ulcers. The bacteria that cause the ulcers are not able to stick to the insides of the stomach long enough to create an ulcer.

If you didn't freeze bags of fresh berries for the rest of the year, dried cranberries are available year round. Just like the juice, they must be sweetened to be edible, so don't expect to find plain dried berries. However, unlike fresh berries, the dried ones have very little vitamin C. It is destroyed in the drying. But both fresh and dried are contain fiber, about 4 g for a cup of fresh or half cup of dried. The fiber is pectin, one of the soluble fibers which helps lower cholesterol.

And the best news is that dried berries still have enough power to keep bacteria from sticking to our stomachs or bladders. At least in one small study, a third of a cup of dried cranberries a day was enough to stop the reoccurrence of bladder infections.

Dried cranberries are still expensive, so you're not likely to start eating them by the cupful. But you can use them like raisins. Just add a few to the breakfast oatmeal, sprinkle some on your salad, or drop a few on top of pancakes while they cook. Here's a recipe adapted from our new Simply Florida cookbook. The original calls for a cup of blueberries, but it's delicious with dried cranberries as well. And fat free too! Enjoy!

Mixed Fruit Cobbler

1 (28 oz) can sliced peaches, drained	½ to 1 cup dried cranberries
1 (28 oz) can pears, undrained	3 cups applesauce
2 cups baking (biscuit) mix	1 Tbsp sugar

Preheat oven to 375° F. Combine the drained peaches, undrained pears, cranberries and 2 cups of the applesauce in a large bowl and stir gently. Spread into a 9x13 inch baking dish. Mix the last 1 cup of applesauce with the baking mix in a bowl and pour over the fruit mixture. Sprinkle with the sugar. Bake for 35 to 45 minutes until browned and bubbly. Serves 10.

The Simply Florida cookbook is available from our office for \$25. Call 744-5519.

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