

# Cranberries



## What are cranberries?

Cranberries are tangy tasting berries, that are round and bright red when ripe. Cranberries grow on low-lying vines and are .8 to 2.5 cm in diameter.



## Interesting Facts:

- Cranberries grow wild in some areas of Nova Scotia.
- Besides containing Vitamin C and other nutrients, cranberries contain proanthocyanidins, which can limit the adhesion of certain bacteria to the urinary tract wall, thus preventing infections. They also contain antioxidants, which may protect against cancer.
- Fresh cranberries are available in Nova Scotia from September to December. Frozen cranberries are available year-round.

## Where are cranberries produced in Nova Scotia?

Most cranberries are grown in the Annapolis Valley, but they are also grown in Yarmouth, along the South Shore and Cape Breton.

## How many cranberries do we produce?

Nova Scotia has around 60 hectares of

cranberries, with 21 growers. The annual cranberry crop is about 360 tonnes, worth around one million dollars.

## How are cranberries produced?

Cranberry growth and survival depends on a rare and fragile combination of soils and geology, the right climate and a knowledgeable grower. Cranberries are grown in bogs that are natural or man made, and need sand or peat soil. These bogs must have an ample water supply for irrigation and for harvest flooding.

To start a cranberry bog, growers must first remove wild growth from the bog, then level the land and plant vines. Cranberry vines are started from vine cuttings. These are 10 to 25cm long pieces of vine which are placed directly into the ground. It takes 2 to 3 years before a cranberry vine will bear fruit, and with good management it will be full-bearing in 5 to 6 years.

Cranberries need pruning every second year, and they do produce in the pruning year as well. Fertilization is done carefully to promote the growth of berry production while minimizing vine growth. For crop pollination, a high level of bee activity is important. Hives are placed in the crop when 10 to 20% of the plants are in bloom.

Cranberries grow in clusters on the vine. When it is time to harvest the cranberries destined for processing, growers flood the fields. A beater is run over vines to shake berries loose. The berries, which float, have a soft landing in the water. The berries are

corralled with floating booms. They are then pumped onto trucks.

Berries that are to be used in the fresh market are harvested dry. A mechanical harvester “combs” berries off the vines.

### **How are cranberries used?**

Cranberries are used fresh or frozen, in cranberry sauce, cranberry juice and cranberry jelly. They are used in baking, in products such as cranberry muffins or bread. Sweetened dried cranberries are a popular snack, and are also useful in baking and candy making.

### **What happens after cranberries leave the farm?**

In Nova Scotia, berries are packaged and sold fresh. Nova Scotia exports fresh cranberries as far as Calgary and Texas. A limited number of cranberries are processed on farms. These cranberries can be made into juice, sauces, jams, marmalades, mincemeat, or dried. There are no major processing facilities in Nova Scotia, so most cranberries are trucked to Quebec or Massachusetts for processing.

### **What challenges do cranberry producers face?**

Nova Scotia cranberry producers must protect the crops from frost throughout the growing season. Cranberry growing sites need access to a good clean water source with pH below 5.5. Producers also have to deal with fluctuating prices of berries, driven by the current world oversupply situation.

### **Who's involved in the cranberry industry?**

- Owners and producers
- Field workers
- Equipment sales/repair
- Agricultural supply companies
- Apiarists
- Packaging design/manufacture/sales
- Researchers
- Truckers

### **Contacts and other resources:**

Nova Scotia Cranberry Growers' Association

