

Tis the Season... Or Always the Season for Cranberries

by John Rizzo

Now that November is here and it's beginning to feel like Autumn; cranberry season is in full bloom. Cranberries are synonymous with the holiday season, but thanks to frozen and dried cranberries, this has become a multi-billion dollar year round industry.

Cranberries grow on vines in what they call bogs -marshy beds that are generally found near wetlands.

The harvest is all but complete in the New England states; beginning in mid September and running through mid November. There are two methods of harvest -wet and dry. Walk behind machines remove the berries from the vines and fill burlap bags in a dry harvest. These are often removed from the bogs in helicopters. From there they are graded based upon color and their ability to bounce. The firm berries will bounce and the soft will not. These are packaged and sold fresh.

During a wet harvest, the bogs are literally flooded which cause the cranberries to float. "Egg-beaters", as they are referred to in the industry, stir up the water in the bogs and cranberries drop from the vines. Booms are used to pull the berries to one area in which they are lifted by a conveyor or pumped into trucks for delivery. These cranberries are primarily used for sauce, juice, and dried.

I find the dried cranberries can add a burst of flavor to a lot of dishes. They especially compliment salads with color and flavor.

Spinach Almond and Cranberry Salad

Yield: 4

Spinach Leaves	4 Cups	Sliced Almonds	½ Cup
Sugar	1 TBL	Dried Cranberries	½ Cup
Red Onions, Thin	¼ Cup	Feta Cheese	½ Cup
Orange Segments	1 Cup		

Place the almonds on a baking stone or parchment lined pan, sprinkle with sugar and toast at 350° F for 5 to 10 minutes -until the nuts begin to brown. Remove from the oven and let cool.

Meanwhile, remove any thick stems from the spinach and place in a serving bowl. (Bagged spinach is almost always prewashed). Attractively arrange the onions, orange segments, dried cranberries, and feta cheese on top of the greens. Sprinkle the top with the coated almonds. Serve with your dressing of choice.



Cranberries are gathered with a boom in a flooded bog