

Lowbush Cranberries

INDIGENOUS HARVEST OF THE MONTH

Eat More Alaska Grown Lowbush Cranberries

You can find Lowbush Cranberries practically everywhere in Alaska! They grow best on the tundra and beneath birch and spruce trees. Found on low evergreen shrubs with dark green leaves, low bush cranberries are bright red in color with a very tart but flavorful taste. Frozen or dried, they can be stored for a long time. They are great ingredient for a variety of foods, such as jams, syrups, or savory dishes.

Why Eat More Lowbush Cranberries?

Nutrition Facts

Serving Size	1/2 cup raw
Amount Per Serving	
Calories 55	
	% Daily Value
Total Fat 0g	1%
Saturated Fat 0 g	0%
Sodium 0mg	0%
Total Carbohydrate 12g	4%
Dietary Fiber 0g	0%
Sugar 0g	
Protein 1g	3%
Vitamin A 2%	Vitamin C 35%
Calcium 3%	Iron 2%

- Lowbush cranberries are an excellent source of Vitamin C and antioxidants.
- Cranberries grown in Alaska have been shown to have stronger antioxidant properties than those grown in the Lower 48.
- Because they can be found so many places in Alaska and are healthy, it is important to take advantage of harvesting lowbush cranberries.

How are lowbush cranberries used traditionally?

Traditionally, lowbush cranberries are mixed with meat and fat. They can be made into cranberry sauce or used in akutaq. It is a bushy plant that spreads by underground stems to form dense clonal colonies. They grow best on the tundra, and beneath birch and spruce trees.

The Dena'ina say that the cranberry is more sustaining than any other berry. The Iñupiaq stored cranberries in a qallivik, a special long birch basket with a lid sewn on it, which they kept in a ground pit or propped up in a tree for safe keeping.

How to Choose, Stores and Prepare Lowbush Cranberries

Choose: Berries should be ripe and firm. Avoid those that are soft and mushy. Remember to harvest after frost for best flavor.

Store: If using the lowbush cranberries while fresh, store in a cool place. To preserve them, they can be frozen or dried, so they last a long time but still taste great.

Prepare: Lowbush cranberries can be used in a variety of ways. The fruit can be put into pies or made into jams, syrups, or juice. They can be used with meat dishes and traditional dishes. They may be tart, but you can also eat them by themselves.

Harvesting Lowbush Cranberries

Although they can be picked almost any time of the year, lowbush cranberries are best harvested in the late fall or early spring. They are also more flavorful after the first frost. Unpicked berries get buried under snow in winter and are good to eat frozen, or ready to pick in spring. Flowers on the bush usually bloom in June or July.

Recipe

Low Bush Cranberry Warm Cider

- 4 cups Cranberries
- 4 cups water
- 1 stick of cinnamon
- 6 whole cloves
- ½ cup brown sugar
- 1 dash ground nutmeg.

In large pot, combine all ingredients. Bring liquid to simmer over medium heat for 10 minutes. Turn off heat and let mixture cool down for 10 minutes. Strain liquid through cheesecloth, pressing down on berries to get all the juice. Reheat liquid to serve.

Native Names for Low Bush Cranberries

Yup'ik: Kavirliq

Tlingit: Dáxw

Unangam Tunuu- Eastern dialect: Kiikan

UT – Atka dialect: Tuyangis

Iñupiaq: Kimmigeaq

Learning Activity

Draw pictures of lowbush cranberries in the wild. Focus on the bright red color of the berries and the difference in color from the leaves. Use colored pencils, crayons, or paint. Lead a discussion on low bush cranberries with the following questions:

- How does the color of the berry help with harvesting them?
- What ways can you use cranberries for food?
- Ask students to share their experience with harvesting or finding low bush cranberries.



For more information, visit the Alaska Farm to School Month website at:

<https://www.farmtoschoolalaska.org/harvestofthemonth/>