

# Highbush Cranberries

**H**ighbush cranberries are shrubs that grow in most areas of Alaska in cool woods and thickets or on gravelly or rocky banks. The leaves, which are almost like maple leaves in shape, turn red in the fall. The fruit, a red or orange drupe with a flattened stone, grows in clusters on short branches. This berry is a member of the honeysuckle family but has received the cranberry name through common usage. The scientific name is *Viburnum edule*.

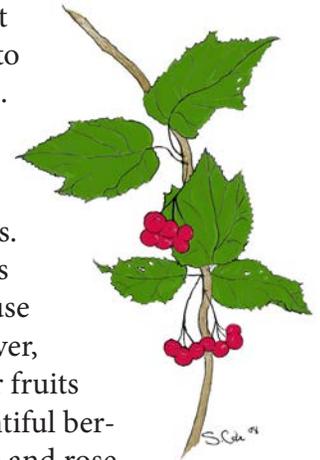
The ripe fruit is available in late summer and fall; it softens after the first frost. If picked before the first frost, just before the true ripe stage, the fruit is more acidic in flavor. Highbush cranberries have a musty flavor and odor, but sweeten a little after the first frost. Berries can be picked through the winter.

Highbush cranberries are high in vitamin A (20 percent of the recommended daily allowance per ½ cup serving), vitamin C (25 percent of the recommended daily allowance) and dietary fiber (28 percent of the recommended daily allowance). One serving (½ cup) has 60 calories.

Highbush cranberries are a rich source of antioxidants, a group of biochemicals shown to be an important part of the human diet. Research with fruits shows cultivated blueberries with a score of 24, which is higher than other commercial fruits studied. Anything above 40 is considered very high. High-

bush cranberries score much higher at 174. When the berries are processed, antioxidant levels change, but they are still high compared to other fruits (see chart below).

Highbush cranberries make a beautiful jelly and are popular in many products. The berries aren't used in pies and other baked goods because of the large, flat seeds. However, they combine well with other fruits and when used with less plentiful berries like raspberries, currants and rose hips, enhance their flavor. They also combine well with rhubarb, apples and lemons.



## How to Clean and Store

Spread a clean, dry, terry cloth towel over a slanted surface, such as a cutting board, with one end propped up a few inches above the other. Gently roll the berries down the towel; most of the debris and leaves will cling to the towel while the berries roll off. Highbush cranberries should be stored covered in the refrigerator and will keep three to four days. Store in shallow containers to prevent crushing the berries.

## Oxygen radical absorption capacity (ORAC) for highbush cranberry products. ORAC values indicate overall antioxidant activity.

Fruit leather	620	Canned fruit	80
Frozen fruit	160	Sauce	70
Frozen juice	150	Syrup	50
Canned juice	110	Jam	50

## How to Freeze

Choose firm berries with glossy skins. Remove any stems or leaves and sort out shriveled berries. Wash, only if needed, and drain before packaging into freezer containers. Berries can be spread in a single layer on a cookie sheet and placed in the freezer. When frozen, transfer to freezer bags or containers. Properly frozen berries will last up to two years before their quality will begin to deteriorate.

## How to Dry

Because of the large seed, highbush cranberries are not suitable for drying. However, the puree can be made into an excellent fruit leather.

## How to Extract Juice

Combine 4 cups clean highbush cranberries with 1 cup water. Crush berries and simmer for 10 minutes. Strain through a jelly bag or layers of cheesecloth. For clear juice, do not twist or press jelly bag or cheesecloth. For long-term storage, the juice should be frozen or canned. *Yield: 2 cups juice*

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### *Hot pack for juice*

Sterilize canning jars. Heat juice, stirring occasionally, until it begins to boil. Pour into hot jars, leaving ¼ inch headspace. Wipe jar rims. Adjust lids. Process in a boiling water canner.

*Pints or quarts* *5 minutes*

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## To Prepare Puree

Combine 4 cups cleaned highbush cranberries with 1 cup water. Crush berries and simmer for 10 minutes. Force through a medium sieve or food mill. Discard seeds and skins. *Yield: 2 cups puree*

To freeze: Pack into rigid containers leaving ½ inch headspace for expansion. Seal and freeze.

To can: Fill hot jars with hot puree, leaving ¼ inch headspace. Process quarts or pints in a boiling water bath for 15 minutes.

## Recipes

### **Highbush Cranberry Rhubarb Orange Juice**

2 cups highbush cranberry juice  
2 cups rhubarb juice\*  
2 cup reconstituted orange juice  
½ cup sugar

Combine all ingredients and chill before serving.

*Yield: 6 cups*

\*To extract rhubarb juice: Cut rhubarb into ¼-inch pieces. Measure 4 cups cut rhubarb into a glass or plastic bowl or a stainless steel saucepan. Boil 2½ cups water and pour over rhubarb. Cover bowl or pan and let rhubarb and water stand for at least 6 hours. Strain through a jelly bag or a cheesecloth-lined sieve or colander. Do not squeeze.

*Yield: 2½ cups*

*Rhubarb juice may also be extracted with a steam juicer. Follow the manufacturer's direction for steam juicing rhubarb.*

### **Highbush Cranberry Jelly**

5 cups highbush cranberry juice  
7 cups sugar  
3 ounces liquid pectin

Sterilize jars and prepare lids. Open liquid pectin pouch and stand upright in a cup or glass. Combine juice and sugar in a large saucepan. Place on high heat; stir constantly and bring to a full rolling boil that cannot be stirred down. Add the liquid pectin and heat again to a full rolling boil. Boil hard for 1 minute, stirring constantly. Remove from heat and quickly skim off foam. Immediately pour hot jelly into hot canning jars, leaving ¼ inch headspace. Wipe jar rims and cover with prepared two-piece lids. Process for 5 minutes in a boiling water bath.

*Yield: 8–10 cups*

## Spiced Highbush Cranberry Freezer Jam

1 cup highbush cranberry puree  
1 cup apple juice  
3 ounces frozen orange juice concentrate  
¼ teaspoon cloves  
½ teaspoon nutmeg  
½ teaspoon cinnamon  
3½ cups sugar  
6 ounces liquid pectin

Combine puree, apple juice, orange juice concentrate, spices and sugar in a saucepan. Heat to just 110 degrees F, stirring constantly until the sugar is dissolved. Remove from heat. Add liquid pectin. Stir well. Ladle jam into freezer containers; cover with tight lids. Cool until set; freeze. *Yield:* 5–6 cups

## Highbush Cranberry Apple Butter

2 quarts highbush cranberries  
1 cup water  
4 cups unsweetened applesauce  
6 cups sugar  
1 teaspoon cinnamon  
½ teaspoon cloves  
½ teaspoon salt  
1 lemon, grated rind and juice

Boil berries and water together until berries pop and are soft. Put through a sieve or food mill to remove seeds. Reheat and add the applesauce, sugar, cinnamon, cloves and salt. Simmer until thick. Remove from heat and add the lemon juice and grated rind. Spoon apple butter into jars, leaving ¼ inch headspace. Wipe jar rims and cover with two-piece lids. Process for 15 minutes in a boiling water bath. *Yield:* 8 cups

- **To sterilize canning jars**, when processing for less than 10 minutes in a canner, boil in water for 5 minutes.
- **To prepare two-piece lids** (rings and tops), wash, rinse and set aside until ready to use.
- **If less sugar is desired** in recipes calling for pectin, be sure to use no-sugar-needed pectin and follow the instructions on the box.
- **To use a boiling water canner**, see instructions on page 4.

## Spiced Highbush Cranberry Sauce or Ketchup

6 cups highbush cranberries  
1½ teaspoons celery salt  
1½ teaspoons salt  
1½ teaspoons cinnamon  
½ teaspoon pepper  
2 cups sugar  
1½ teaspoons allspice  
½ cup water  
1½ cups onions, chopped fine  
1 cup cider vinegar  
1½ teaspoons ground cloves

Cook the cranberries in the water until soft, then put through a food mill or a sieve to remove seeds. Add the onions, vinegar, sugar and spices. Boil until the mixture thickens and reaches the proper consistency. Immediately pour ketchup into hot canning jars, leaving ¼ inch headspace. Wipe jar rims and cover with two-piece lids. Process for 10 minutes in a boiling water bath. Serve this cranberry sauce with poultry or meat or use in baked beans. *Yield:* 4 cups

## UAF Cooperative Extension Service Resources

*Jams and Jellies* – FNH-00730

*Canning Overview* – FNH-00705

*Using Alaska's Wild Berries and Other Wild Edibles* (\$), FNH-00120

*Fruit Leather*, FNH-00228

*Canning Basics*: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=LpI23AKWubs&t=70s](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LpI23AKWubs&t=70s)

*Jams and Jellies*: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=6u7\\_\\_5Xn0Lk](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6u7__5Xn0Lk)

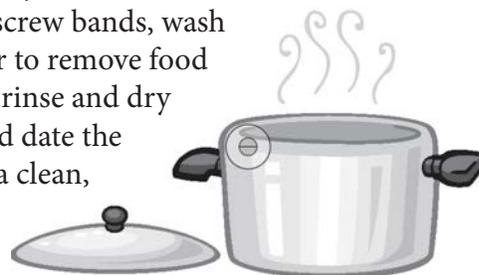
**To process in a boiling water canner, follow these steps:**

Fill the canner halfway with water. Place empty jars in canner to heat until needed. Preheat water to a low boil. Place filled jars, fitted with lids, into the canner on the rack. Add more boiling water, if needed, so the water level is at least 1 inch above jar tops. Cover with the canner lid and turn heat to its highest position until water boils vigorously. When the water boils, set a timer for the recommended processing time indicated in the recipe. Lower heat setting to maintain a gentle boil throughout the processing time.

When the jars have been boiled for the recommended time, turn off the heat and remove the canner lid. Using a jar lifter, remove the jars and place them on a towel, leaving at least 1 inch of space between the jars during cooling.

After cooling jars for 12 to 24 hours, remove the screw bands and test seals. Press the middle of the lid with a finger. If the lid springs up when finger is released, the lid is unsealed. If a lid fails to seal on a jar, remove the lid and check the jar-sealing surface for tiny nicks. If necessary, change the jar, add a new, properly prepared lid and reprocess within 24 hours using the same processing time. Alternately, store in the refrigerator and use within three days or adjust headspace to 1½ inches and freeze.

If lids are tightly sealed on cooled jars, remove screw bands, wash the lid and jar to remove food residue, then rinse and dry jars. Label and date the jars. Store in a clean, cool, dark, dry place.



[www.uaf.edu/ces](http://www.uaf.edu/ces) or 1-877-520-5211

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