

What are Lingonberries?

Lingonberries are small, red, edible berries that grow on a perennial, woody, evergreen shrub with a low growth habit. They are related to both blueberries and cranberries. The first fruit ripens in mid-summer, around July, and the second crop ripens in late September to early November. Lingonberries are native to Scandinavia, Alaska, and northeastern Canada. They are similar to cranberries but not quite as tart and they make great jam, jelly, juice, sauce, wine and liqueur.

Selection

Fresh lingonberries are not easy to find as there are only a few local growers in the Mt. Vernon and Chehalis areas in Washington, and the Willamette Valley region in Oregon. When you do find them, treat them as you would cranberries—wash them and discard soft or browned ones. Lingonberry juice concentrate and lingonberry preserves are available at select locations in Washington and Oregon.

Storage

Lingonberries contain high levels of benzoic acid, which helps provide for a long refrigerated shelf life. Lingonberry jams, jellies, or other products should be kept in the refrigerator after opening.

Using Lingonberries

Lingonberries can be used in any recipe that calls for cranberries or blueberries. They make a great accompaniment to meat and cheese dishes.

- Use as a garnish for pancakes, waffles, French toast or crepes.
- Add to other fruit in pies or cobblers.
- Heat and stir lingonberries until soft and crushed, sweeten, then add small amounts of this “juice” to ginger ale or soda water for a unique beverage.
- Stir lingonberries into cookie, muffin or sweet bread dough.
- Lingonberries complement wild poultry, game, turkey, chicken, pork, and ham.
- Use lingonberries in place of cranberries to make sauces and relishes.

A Berry by Any Other Name

You may know lingonberries by one of their many other names: cowberry, red whortle berry, foxberry, northern mountain cranberry, dry ground cranberry, rock cranberry, partridge berry, or whimberry.

How Nutritious are Lingonberries?

Since lingonberries are closely related to cranberries, they probably have a similar nutritional content, although exact data is unavailable; they are a good source of vitamin C.

Lingonberries contain valuable phyto-chemicals, which are natural chemicals that plants produce. In particular, lingonberries possess anthocyanin, about 100 milligrams per 3-1/2 ounces of berries.¹ Anthocyanin, a member of the flavonoid family, is a potent antioxidant. Researchers believe that these substances can help reduce the risk of heart disease, heart attack and cancer.²

Anthocyanins help prevent the oxidation of cholesterol in the blood. By doing so, they keep blood vessels healthy. Therefore, anthocyanins play a preventive role in the early stages of America’s number one killer—heart disease.

Researchers believe anthocyanins may also help decrease inflammation and stop cancer before it gets started.

¹ J. Kuhnau, The Flavonoids: A Class of Semi-essential Food Components: Their role in human nutrition. *World Review of Nutrition and Diet* 24, 117-91, 1976.

² Bohm, H. et al. Flavonols, flavone and anthocyanins as natural antioxidants of food and their possible role in the prevention of chronic diseases. *Z Ernährungswiss* 1998 Jun; 37(2): 147-63. (German)

Enjoying Lingonberries

Salmon in Lingonberries and Red Wine

1 large salmon filet (1-2 lbs weight)
Salt and pepper to taste
1 teaspoon olive oil
1 cup chicken or vegetable broth
½ cup lingonberries
2 tablespoons red wine

Preheat oven to 400°F. Rinse salmon under running water then place in sprayed or oiled baking dish.

Drizzle salmon with olive oil. Sprinkle with salt and pepper to taste.

Bring the cup of broth to a boil. Remove from heat. Add lingonberries and red wine. Pour over salmon.

Bake for five minutes per inch of thickness at the thickest point. Fish is done when opaque and flakes easily with a fork.

Makes approximately three to four 4-ounce servings per one pound of fish.

Food from the Field

Local farmers are providing new foods for your table. Traditionally harvested from the wild in Scandinavia, lingonberries are now being considered by local farmers because they grow easily in our region and they have unique taste and health value.

Buying local produce not only gives you fresh, nutritious food, but also enhances your community in these ways:

- Keeps small farmers in business and supports the local economy.
- Preserves farmland and open space in your area.
- Conserves natural resources—less fuel used in transportation and packaging.
- Preserves the environment with responsible use of water, fewer farm chemicals, and less air pollution.

Visit a farmers' market weekly during the growing season and look for the Puget Sound Fresh label at your grocery store. Make a difference with your food dollars!

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Lingonberries

An aromatic, tart fruit

Food from the Field Series