



## Cindy's Corner

### Cranberry Projects

Just like it's a smart idea to eat seasonal produce and shop locally, it's a good idea to draw on seasonal and holiday-themed material to use as teaching tools. It will keep your classroom energized and provide you with a continuous flow of fresh material to use for teaching. Cranberries are a good example of how to use seasonal produce. In November, stores are stocked with an abundance of every type of cranberry - dried, frozen and fresh - in preparation for Thanksgiving. Here are a few ideas on how to incorporate cranberries into your classroom to help you get started...

Start at the sensory level. The sensory nature of cranberries makes them a perfect teaching tool for sensory-based activities. They are a brilliant red, providing good contrast and visual stimulation. They pop when you crush them, providing clear auditory feedback. They have a sharp, tart taste and provide a good contrast between sweet and sour. They have a fresh, fruity aroma and provide plenty of tactile input - check out the recipe for finger painting with cranberries below!



Use cranberries to generate language and build vocabulary by exploring them for properties and attributes (*Vocabulary & Concept Development*). Compare the difference between the inside and the outside of a cranberry, and the difference between fresh, frozen and dried cranberries. Identify which senses you are using to get information (*Life Science/Biology*). Add cranberry-related words to your monthly vocabulary list (bog, vine, crop, harvest habitat, float, etc.). Read supplementary books about cranberries Clarence, the Cranberry Who Couldn't Bounce by Jim

Coogan, or Cranberries, Fruit of the Bog by Diane L. Burns (*Reading and Literature*).

Create experience stories and memory books using the appropriate medium, such as Braille, large-print, Mayer-Johnson pictures, tangible objects, (use dried cranberries) or a combination of mediums (*Composition*). Use personal communication systems, voice output devices and language support strategies to share cranberry facts with peers (*Language*).

Use cranberries as fun math manipulatives. Count them, group them into sets, weigh them, estimate how many are in a package, and use them to teach addition and subtraction. Go to the grocery store and buy cranberries (*Money Concepts*). Use cranberries to demonstrate science concepts - see if they float (*Probability*), freeze them, dry them, and cook them (*Physical Science / States of Matter*). Use them to demonstrate movement - bounce them and roll them (*Physics / Position and Motion of Objects*). Study the life cycle of a cranberry (*Life Science/Characteristics of Living Things*). Take a tour of a cranberry farm and study the habitat (*Life Science/ Living Things and their Environment*) - many cranberry farms flood their bogs to harvest their cranberries, which can be used as a good, practical demonstration of the concept of floating.

Incorporate visual, or tactile scanning, by searching for cranberries on a tray with a high contrast background (e.g., APH bright yellow work trays). Build *classification* and *discrimination* skills by sorting cranberries from other small fruits, such as grapes and cherries, or finding all the cranberries in a group of assorted fruit. Make it a game and use a timer. Incorporate *quality control* by identifying spoiled cranberries among fresh ones - spoiled cranberries don't float. Use cranberries for cooking activities and art projects (*following directions*). Focus on developing functional hand skills - picking up one cranberry at a time to transfer it is a motivating way to work on developing a *pincer grasp* (thumb and forefinger). Pounding, popping and squishing cranberries is a fun way to work on hand strength.

Here are some fun activities to get you started.

### **Dried Cranberries**

(Adapted from The Cape Cod Cranberry Growers' Association Recipes)

You will need:

- 1 12-ounce bag of fresh cranberries
- 2 quarts of boiling water
- 1/4-cup sugar or corn syrup
- Access to a refrigerator and an oven
- Latex gloves if making for others



Transfer the cranberries to a bowl (good functional hand skill!)



Pour boiling water over the berries (staff or parent can do this part). Let them sit in the water until the skins pop - great auditory skill - count the pops to make it fun! Don't let the berries boil or the flesh will turn mushy. Drain.

Transfer to a cookie sheet or foil pan (optional, coat the berries with corn syrup or sugar to sweeten them). Place the pan in the freezer for 2 hours (this step promotes faster drying).



Remove the pan from the freezer. Turn the oven on for 10-15 minutes at 350. Place the cookie sheet in the oven, then turn the oven off and let them sit overnight.

Top cereal with them the next morning when you take them out of the oven, eat them for snack, mix them with trail mix, use them to top off yogurt...

Note: Store the dried cranberries in the freezer if not using immediately.

## Finger Painting With Cranberries

You will need:

- 1/2 can of cranberry sauce per student
- Wax paper or finger painting paper
- Masking tape (to hold the paper in place)



What a great sensory activity! Simply use cranberry sauce in place of traditional finger-paints. Finger painting is also a good way to work on functional hand skills, e.g., Grasp - palm facing down / Two hands together -same motion, crossing the midline. Add some fresh cranberries for textural interest; pop them, squeeze them, and squish them around the paper any way you like (hand strength). Talk about what it feels like as you paint (*language*). Provide appropriate descriptive terms and plenty of encouragement - licking fingers permitted! If a child or student is tactile defensive, encourage them to put their

hands on top of yours as you do the painting (this is a good desensitizing technique). Label spatial movements (up/down/across/in a circle...) and describe the texture as you paint.

## Wild Bird Feeder

(Adapted from Ocean Spray Cranberries)

You will need:

- Large pinecones (at least one for each student)
- Ribbon, string, yarn or wire
- Peanut butter
- Dried cranberries





Soften peanut butter 25-40 seconds in a microwave (staff can assist with this step). Pour the peanut butter onto a plate. Place birdseed and dried cranberries on separate plates. Roll the pinecone in the softened peanut butter then into the birdseed until coated.



Stick cranberries onto the pinecone (count out a given number of cranberries for each pinecone to incorporate counting skills), or roll the pinecone in the dried cranberries. Work cooperatively, assembly-line style, or setup independent workstations for each student to make their own bird feeder. Hang from a tree with ribbon.

Have fun!