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## **Medical research speaks for the mighty cranberry**

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Cranberries displayed in several forms: dried, whole fresh, sliced fresh, juice, and sauce. *(Photo provided by the Cranberry Marketing Committee)*

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The Cranberry Marketing Committee in Wareham, MA, tracks the date of publication and type of articles published in media venues to keep abreast of usage by chefs and consumers throughout the year, said Marketing Director Tobias Stapleton.

“We continue to see a spike in coverage during the holiday season, but attention to cranberries does not abate that much during the rest of the year,” said Mr. Stapleton. “Other berry groups, such as blueberry and raspberry, have become aggressive in their research, and just as aggressive in promoting those research results. This is why we hear so much about the antioxidants in berries today.”

The cranberry industry is also extremely aggressive in its research, but its strongest focus is its ongoing work with organizations in heart health, digestive, urinary, gingivitis and other categories to determine and document the medical benefits of cranberries. The Committee works with dietitians, renal care providers and numerous organizations including the National Kidney Foundation and the National Dietetic Association.

Mr. Stapleton said that more than 200 original research and review articles have been published in peer-review medical and nutritional journals about cranberries. The studies consist of analytical, animal, laboratory and human clinical trials.

“We have worked with the Cranberry Institute, our sister organization, which serves as an umbrella group for health research, to build a cranberry research library,” he said. “It went live about two months ago, and is now available to the public at [www.cranberryinstitute.org](http://www.cranberryinstitute.org). We took all the research we could find and compiled it into one place.”

He added that the resulting library is a very compelling testimony on the many health and medical benefits of cranberries.

The committee concurs with some medical experts that the public has been inundated with food groups making antioxidant claims in the media. Rather than joining this promotional bandwagon, it decided to focus on medical research that shows the multiple health benefits of cranberries. It is also using this message in its promotion in its export markets. Cranberries are exported to Europe, Japan, Korea, Mexico and Australia. Mr. Stapleton said that 23 percent of U.S. cranberry sales are now sold internationally.

“We use a three-pronged approach for our marketing and promotional programs,” he said. “They are health, culinary versatility and taste. The health aspect is backed by the numerous and ongoing research projects documented in places such as the new on-line library.

“In culinary versatility, cranberries are now available in fresh, dried, powdered and juiced forms,” he continued. “We have looked at adding other fruit to cranberries products in order to eliminate the addition of sugar. Grapes or other berries, for example, can provide a natural sweetness to dried cranberries and cranberry juices.”

The third prong, taste, has the CMC looking at ways to focus on groups — ones that can influence cranberry demand as well as health groups.

“We wanted to target chefs by showing them the versatility of cranberries,” said Mr. Stapleton. “Last year, we began looking at high-profile culinary events in the U.S. To date, we have participated in the South Beach Food & Wine Festival, the Food Network’s New York City Wine & Food Festival, the

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Aspen Food & Wine Classic and several other events.”

As a part of its participation, the CMC reaches out to participating chefs prior to the events to encourage them to use cranberries, and they arrange for producers to provide the cranberries to the chefs at no charge.

Another boon to cranberry consumption is the increase in current culinary food movements and trends that bring people back to their kitchens to enjoy cooking in ways that reflect how meals were made generations ago.

“We are seeing a trend that is ticking away from the use of canned cranberries to people making their own sauces and other recipes,” said Mr. Stapleton. “Inter-generational recipes are resurfacing and being accepted strongly by home cooks and chefs alike today.”

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