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How to Make Homemade Cranberry Sauce



Are you tired of bitter, tasteless cranberry sauce from the grocery store? Wouldn't you rather have fresh, preservative-free homemade cranberry sauce? It is SO easy to make - from start to finish only about 15 minutes. It's perfect with chicken, turkey, Christmas, Thanksgiving and the winter months! The bright color livens up any dinner table, kids love it and it is low sugar while loaded with vitamin C and fiber. You can make it with no sugar (very tart), some sugar (sweet), or a natural sweetener, like honey, or a sugar substitute (like Stevia (or if you prefer, Splenda)), as you prefer!

You can store this in the fridge, can it to store in the pantry, or freeze it. It is easy to make and can, if you want some for later! Here's how to do it, complete instructions in easy steps and completely illustrated.

Prepared this way, the canned jars have a shelf life of 12 months to 18 months, and require no special attention.

If you would rather make [jellied cranberry sauce, see this page!](#)

Ingredients and Equipment

- 2 bags (12 oz each)
Cranberries
- Sugar and or Stevia (or if you prefer, Splenda) to taste (normally 1 to 2 cups of either)
- 1 medium or large pot

Makes about 1 quart of cranberry sauce

If you plan to can it for later:

- Jar grabber (to pick up the hot jars)
- Lid lifter (has a magnet to pick the lids out of the boiling water where you sanitize them. (\$2 at mall kitchen stores and local "big box" stores, but it's usually cheaper online from our affiliates)
- Jar funnel (\$2 at mall kitchen stores and local "big box" stores, but it's usually cheaper online from our affiliates)
- At least 1 large pot

- Ball jars (Publix, Kroger, other grocery stores and some "big box" stores carry them - about \$8 per dozen quart jars including the lids and rings)
- 1 Water Bath Canner (a huge pot with a lifting rack to sanitize the jars of cranberry sauce after filling (about \$30 to \$35 at mall kitchen stores and local "big box" stores, but it's usually cheaper online from our affiliates) You CAN use a large pot instead, but the canners are deeper, and have a rack top make lifting the jars out easier. If you plan on canning every year, they're worth the investment.
- Large spoons and ladles

Recipe and Directions

Step 1 - Get your cranberries



There are very few places to pick your own, but happily, they store and transport well, so there probably isn't much difference. Most grocery stores sell the 12 oz bags. Look for firm berries with a dark color.

Step 2 - If you are canning: Wash the jars and lids

Now's a good time to get the jars ready, so you won't be rushed later. The dishwasher is fine for the jars; especially if it has a "sanitize" cycle, the water bath processing will sanitize them as well as the contents! If you don't have a dishwasher with a sanitize cycle, you can wash the containers in hot, soapy water and rinse, then sanitize the jars by boiling them 10 minutes, and keep the jars in hot water until they are used. Leave the jars in the dishwasher on "heated dry" until you are ready to use them. Keeping them hot will prevent the jars from breaking when you fill them with the hot cranberry sauce.



Put the lids into a pan of hot, but not quite boiling water (that's what the manufacturer's recommend) for 5 minutes, and use the magnetic "lid lifter wand" to pull them out.

Step 3 - Wash the cranberries

Pour them in to a large bowl of cold water, and swirl them around, scoop them out with your fingers, feeling for any mushy berries, as you scoop. Discard any mushy, soft berries.



The picture of the 4 berries shows you unripe through ripe. I'd throw out the one on the far left, but use the other 3.



Step 4 - Start the cranberries cooking

They take longer than the apples, so put 2 inches of water (or cranberry or apple juice) in a pot, get it boiling and pour the cranberries in. Let them cook for about 10 minutes, stirring once or twice (you'll hear the berries popping, as the berries cook - you'll kids will get a kick out of that). Once half the berries are popped and the sauce feels mushy, it's done! It should take 10 to 15 minutes of cooking over medium-high heat.



Step 5 - Sweeten the cranberry sauce

Turn off the heat. Add sugar to taste. Start out with 1 cup of sugar or Stevia (or if you prefer, Splenda), as you prefer. Taste and add more if it is still too tart. Of course, you can use other sweeteners, such as honey, agave, or even frozen concentrated fruit juice (like grape).



If you don't plan to can any, you're done! Just serve warm or cold! If you want to can for later, continue through to steps 5 and 6. The cranberry sauce does not need any further cooking; just keep it hot until you get enough made to fill the jars you will put into the canner (Canners hold seven jars at once, whether they are quart or pint size)

Step 6 - Fill the jars and process them in the water bath

Fill them to within 1/2 inch of the top, wipe any spilled cranberry sauce of the top, seat the lid and tighten the ring around them. Put them in the canner and keep them cover with at least 1 inch of water and boiling. if you are at sea level (up to 1,000 ft) boil pint jars for 15 minutes and quart jars for 20 min. If you are at an altitude of 1,000 feet or more, see [the chart at the bottom of this page](#).



Step 7 - Remove and cool the jars - Done

Lift the jars out of the water and let them cool without touching or bumping them in a draft-free place (usually takes overnight) You can then remove the rings if you like, but if you leave them on, at least loosen them quite a bit, so they don't rust in place due to trapped moisture. Once the jars are cool, you can check that they are sealed verifying that the lid has been sucked down. Just press in the center, gently, with your finger. If it pops up and down (often making a popping sound), it is not sealed. If you put the jar in the refrigerator right away, you can still use it. Some people replace the lid and reprocess the jar, then that's a bit iffy. If you heat the contents back up, re-jar them (with a new lid) and the full time in the canner, it's usually ok.

Tips and feedback

- **Comments from a visitor on September 30, 2009:** "Just wanted to share this. Cranberry sauce recipe: 3 cups frozen cranberries 1 cup brown sugar 1 cup orange juice 6 cloves dash cinnamon About one hour before serving: In a large pot, heat brown sugar, spices and OJ until boiling. Add frozen cranberries. Heat until it boils and the berries pop. Turn down the heat, stir and simmer for a few minutes. Pour into a heat-proof serving dish and set it on the table on a trivet or potholder. By dinner time, it will be warm, but not scalding. Note: this is like boiling jam! Wear an oven mitt or long sleeves to avoid getting splashed by the mixture. "