

The Zing Starts Here



PHOTOGRAPHS BY VINCENT DeWITT FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

NO SWIMMING FOR THEM Dry-harvested cranberries in Wareham, Mass., will be sold as fresh produce, not made into juice. Below, Curtis Wheeler, 3, eats just-picked fruit at Willows Cranberries.

Why rush? Many Thanksgiving recipes can be made ahead, like bread (A Good Appetite, Page 5), cheese biscotti (Pairings, Page 8) and desserts, this page. Next week: gravy and side dishes.



By DAVID LEITE

WAREHAM, Mass.

IT'S time we lay our cards on the Thanksgiving table: many of us aren't exactly in love with cranberries.

Every year Americans pass platters of turkey, bowls of vegetables and boats of gravy, while gelatinous cylinders of sauce — their bellies banded with ridges from the cans in which they were entombed — sit untouched. Sometimes, in a gesture to the beleaguered cook, a brave few plop some homemade chutney onto plates mounded with mashed potatoes and stuffing. Then, as with turkey-shaped oven mitts, all traces of the fruit disappear until next year.

Yes, cranberries are the neglected stepchild of the season.

But if guests at the holiday table knew what

went into growing the perfect scarlet berry, and if cooks understood the challenges of working with a fruit so sour it makes your jaw sing, the humble cranberry might just be looked upon as the noble autumnal fruit it is, right up there with quince, pomegranate and persimmon.

Considered one of three commercially important fruits native to North America and unknown to European settlers (the others are blueberries and Concord grapes), cranberries were used by Native Americans as food, dye and medicine long before they were co-opted by Thanksgiving advocates.

"No one knows for sure what the Pilgrims ate at that first meal," said Roseann DeGrenier, who owns the Willows Cranberries farms here and in Plymouth, Mass., as she walked along one

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