

Community Voices



NATURAL PERSPECTIVE — Cranberry cravings



By EMILY J. UHRIG, PH.D.
Special to Siuslaw News

Heading into the holidays, many of us expand our diets to include seasonal favorites like pecan pie, eggnog and all things pumpkin spice. While many of these treats take a toll on the waistline, one Thanksgiving favorite can actually

be good for us: the cranberry.

Native to North America, the cranberry's natural range is localized in the northeastern U.S., although most commercially cultivated cranberries grow in Wisconsin.

Oregon is also a major producer as the berries grow well in the sandy soil of our south coast.

Oregon's cranberry cultivation started in 1885 when Charles McFarlin turned from gold panning to planting cranberries.

Today, cranberries are an important source of agricultural revenue for Coos and Curry counties. The temperate coastal climate lengthens the growing season resulting in darker red berries.

In fact, juice from Oregon-grown berries is sometimes mixed with the lighter juice of berries grown elsewhere in order to improve the color.

Sometimes touted as a 'superfood,' fresh cranberries are naturally low in sugar with only about 4 grams per cup (an apple, for comparison, has around 13 grams).

But there is a drawback. Being low in natural sugars means many cranberry products, like juices and sauces, contain a lot of added sugar to compensate for the tartness so going on an all-out cranberry binge may not be the best idea.

However, the cranberry's superfood status is not based only on sugar levels.

Health benefits of cranberries have long been recognized.

Well before European colonists arrived, Native Americans used cranberries for various medicinal purposes and as an ingredient of pemmican, an energy-rich dietary staple.

For sailors, cranberries were a source of vitamin C to ward off scurvy.

The berries also contain naturally antibacterial chemicals that may help prevent urinary tract infections.

Their antibacterial properties could also benefit oral health and a number of cranberry toothpastes are on the market.

Beyond fighting bacteria, cranberries contain antioxidants.

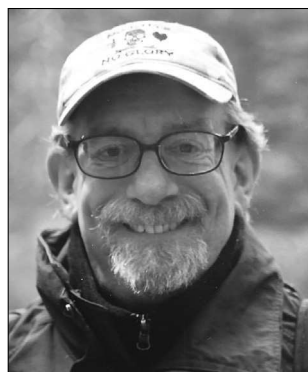
A common health food buzz word, antioxidants are basically chemicals that neutralize some of your body's natural by-products that may otherwise accumulate and adversely affect health.

Other research suggests that cranberries could have an even broader range positive health effects, including helping with ulcers, cholesterol, and blood pressure.

So, while surveying your Thanksgiving table, look out for the cranberries.

Sitting among the rivers of gravy, mountains of stuffing, and outcrops of pumpkin pie, the berries could be an oasis of relative health benefits.

NOTES FROM THE SILTCOOS — Out of the bored room



By BARRY SOMMER
Special to Siuslaw News

Retirement isn't all it's cracked up to be. Yes, you can sleep until way past noon, never change out of your pajama bottoms and generally behave as if the world and you are acting on different time zones

Personal hygiene aside, when the clock starts to become your enemy it then becomes imperative to find an outlet, anything that'll get you out of the house and away from the growing pile of laundry composed mainly of soiled pajama bottoms.

Aside from the volunteer time I like to give there is also a part time job in the hydrocarbon distribution industry as an onsite petroleum dispensation worker. Okay, I work at a local gas station pumping gas into everything from cars to smurf colored side-by-side

ATV's and I liken the brief interactions with customers to our own Oregon coast version of the United Nations.

The summer tourist season is my favorite time as I get to meet and talk with visitors from literally across the globe. One of my favorite games to play is try to guess where they are from based in their accent. Everyone seems to love to see if I can guess their country of origin and when I get it right, well there's usually tip coming, almost as a way of saying thanks for the entertainment.

Whoever said show business doesn't pay never worked at a gas station in a tourist town.

There is an ebb and flow to the business with locals providing the continuous bulk of money during the winter months while the visitors flood in at summertime, adding their revenue stream to that our neighbors provide.

You get to know people when they show up regularly by their faces, names are, at least for me a bit harder to remember. Sometimes I identify people through the vehicle they drive as it is easier to think "hey, here

comes the Pontiac family".

Then there is the couple from Anywhere, USA on their second road trip in the family car. The stories they tell, and believe me they want to talk about what they have seen and where they are going in vivid and lengthy detail.

Californians make up a large portion of our visitors as do Washingtonians, Canadians and a vast array of out-of-state and out-of-country tourists, each ingesting Oregon through a vast array of multi-colored lenses and taking away memories storied by their own culture and experience.

License plates can also be a giveaway as to the origins of our travelers. The problem occurs when the assumption is made that the driver is actually from the state on the plate.

More than twice I have said hi and asked what part of (insert state here) are they from, to which the answer at times might be, in a thick Russian accent "Oh no, we are tourists from the Ukraine and rented the car in Missouri" It is at that point I'll try my best to use my limited Russian which, even in the best of times

sounds more like Klingon than Cyrillic.

I'll never be a diplomat or a translator, unless the Federation needs me.

As the flow of cars, trailers, quads and boats makes its way through the pump islands, they start to blend in and the little details get lost in the procession. There are unexpected exceptions and from this last summer one stood out in wonderful human detail.

It was a family from Colorado, travelling in an almost too small car and trailer and heading for their new life in Oregon. Like pioneers of old they had stuffed their wagon with everything they needed, the children representing one of three generations ready to plant roots when they stop for the last time.

I could see the anxiety in the kids' eyes along with the excitement of the adventure. Tiredness hung on their faces but they knew there were only a few hours left until the end of their 1500 mile sojourn.

As the gas tank filled I bent down and asked the older child, a boy of about 10 how long they had been riding in the car. He lifted his head and looked at

me with eyes belying his age and said "four days" to which I replied that his journey was almost over and soon he would be in a new home, starting a new adventure.

He smiled and said yes, he was happy that in this new home he and his siblings would each finally have their own bedroom. I smiled and waved as they pulled onto Highway 101 to go north, convinced that the indomitable spirit of exploration, adventure and discovery that has led man to inhabit all parts of the globe was still alive and well in the 21st century.

Then it hit me; the most important thing for this boy is finally having his own bedroom. The trip or the disruption of life and job and school had not ruffled him, he simply wanted his own space.

As John Steinbeck said, even though the physical travel ends the actual trip continues forever. May the boy and his family be blessed with the trip of a lifetime in their new home.

These interactions are why I stay engaged with my fellow bipeds. You cannot experience life staying in the bored room.

Us TOO FLORENCE — My prostate cancer journey



By RICHARD MOORE
Prostate cancer survivor

My journey with prostate screening began over 25 years ago when I had a small cancerous growth on my bladder removed. From then on, I had yearly PSA tests which were recommended by my doctor.

My PSA number was usually around 6, which is a bit higher than the PSA of 4 that many doctors see as time to check it out, but mine was not increasing. With my PSA remaining stable, we felt confident in checking it annually, watching

for any change.

In 2017, my family doctor in Florence retired and that year I missed my PSA test.

In the spring of 2018 I had my PSA checked and it had jumped up to 22 which caused the doctor to be alarmed.

Doubling of a PSA in 12 months raises major concerns and will start a concerted effort to discover the reason for it. With mine nearly quadrupling in two years, it is easy to see why my doctor was alarmed. That one PSA test that I missed raised critical questions that we couldn't answer, mainly how did the PSA increase occur? Was it evenly distributed over the two years; did it all occur in the year before or after the missed test?

We'll never know the answer, but we do know the increase meant I wasn't just going to wait to see what the next annual PSA test showed.

A biopsy was scheduled with my urologist, Dr. Brady Walk-

er, Oregon Urology Institute (OUI). His biopsy came back negative.

Not content with those results, Dr. Walker suggested an MRI be done because my PSA number was so high, and he knew cancer could be present in the prostate, but beyond the reach of his biopsy needles.

The MRI showed a suspicious shadow on the back side of my prostate. At that point, Dr. Walker scheduled an appointment at OHSU for a relatively new prostate cancer diagnostic procedure, an MRI guided biopsy. He wasn't going to rest until he knew the significance of that "shadow."

Eleven biopsy samples were taken. The results came back positive for cancer. My Gleason Score was 7. Now we knew that I had a moderately aggressive form of prostate cancer, thanks to the tenaciousness of Dr. Walker. My rapid PSA rise and Gleason 7 suggested — treatment. The

treatment choices given to me were: Nine weeks of radiation, seeding or removal of the prostate. I chose to have my prostate removed. The downside of removal could be difficulty with controlling urination for a period of time and my sex life would be impaired.

My reason for choosing removal was because chances of the cancer spreading was less likely. I've had friends and family members who have gone through different treatments with little success. Since my prostate was removed and "personally" examined by a pathologist, I can rest assured that my cancer was contained inside the prostate.

I didn't want to take the chance of having it spread and now I know it won't. My thought going into surgery was: Get rid of the cancer and continue living! I am happy to say my Aug. 22, surgery was successful. The prostate was removed along

with lymph nodes that tested negative for cancer. A month after surgery my PSA test was 0.7, which is a positive number that I am happy to live with.

The side effects of difficulty controlling urination is improving each day as Dr. Walker said it would. There are procedures available that will aid with a healthy sex life.

All in all, the choice I made is a positive choice for me. I feel good and I'm back to golfing, fishing and doing other favorite activities.

I will continue having my PSA checked in the future and am glad I didn't listen to the message that yearly PSA tests aren't important.

The tests I took raised the red flag that possibly saved my life. Only the modern prostate MRI imaging and guided biopsy technology was able to definitively locate the cancer in time to be cured.

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