



The Journey of the Cranberry: From the Farm to the Table

Michael Piper, Junior

Dinners play a large role in the holiday season. The family gathers around one table, and special food items unseen at other times of year make their way to plates. Among these may be cranberry sauce: canned, jellied, dried, or homemade, it has added a characteristically sweet and tart flavor to holiday meals for decades.

In 1912, cranberry grower and former lawyer Marcus Urann from Hanson, Massachusetts found himself with a surplus of cranberries at the end of the harvesting season. To avoid wasting his crops, Urann decided to can the berries as a sauce. Reaching nationwide markets in 1941 under the name Ocean Spray, the sauce has become a staple of Thanksgiving and Christmas for many American families.

But what exactly is cranberry sauce, and how is it made? The process begins, of course, in a field. More accurately, a bog; this is a deposit either man-made or carved by a glacier, rich in acid peat soil, sand, and gravel. Here cranberry vines can survive indefinitely, with some over a century old and still bearing fruit.

To preserve cranberry vines in the winter, farmers flood their bogs with water, allowing them to freeze over. This regulates the temperature around the plant, preventing it from freezing entirely. By April the bogs are melted again, and the growing season, which lasts until November, commences. Harvest runs from September until the end of November, and then the bogs are flooded and frozen once more.

Growers harvest their cranberries in two dramatically different ways. Dry harvesting leaves bogs drained of water, and farmers use rakers -- similar in size and form to a lawnmower -- to strip berries from their vines. This method accounts for most of the fresh cranberries seen in farmer's markets and grocery stores, but only makes up around 5 percent of the national yield. The rest are wet harvested, where growers flood their bogs and shake cranberries loose from their vines before scooping them up. Berries harvested in this way are typically used for juice, dried, or made into sauce.

Homemade cranberry sauce typically uses whole, and thus dry-harvested, cranberries. The process is straightforward: heat cranberries in sugar water until they disintegrate. However, this often yields a chunky, fluid sauce rather than the smooth, thick jelly common for canned sauce. How is that process different?

Industrially-produced jellied cranberry sauce relies on pectin, a natural polysaccharide (polymer made of sugars) of which cranberries have a high concentration. When heated in liquid under the right conditions, pectin expands and creates a gel. Using environmental controls -- and, of course, sub-millimeter-fine filtering -- companies like Ocean Spray can churn out consistently jellied sauce.

This holiday season, take note of that can or bowl of cranberry sauce on your table and celebrate both its Massachusetts roots and the unique fruit from which it has been made.



The Glow of Snow

Sofia Bottari, Freshman

Snow covers wild branches
Numbing them from growing
The warm sun shines and the strong
wind is blowing
As the sunlight glistens the birds listen
to the sound of the wind
The people pause to join in
The sounds of winter are more than
harsh and cold
But the holiday cheer and people near
make it gold
Now that the magic of winter is here
We must enjoy the snow before it
disappears



Consumerism: A Big Word with a Big Definition

Benji Boyd, Freshman

Let's talk about consumerism.

It's one of those words you say a lot, and maybe you know what it means, maybe you don't. Maybe you have a strong opinion on it that you like to explain in detail to whichever poor soul happened to bring it up. Maybe you like to pretend you're someone with a strong opinion on it, but in reality you're still not so sure what it even means. Maybe you're fine with admitting to people that you have no idea what consumerism is, and you voted for Kanye anyway.

Either way, here it is, spelled out for you. "Consumerism. noun. *The preoccupation of society with the acquisition of consumer goods.*"

First of all, that is a terrible definition. English teachers always say not to use the word in its own definition, so referring to "consumer goods" feels like cheating. 'Consumerism' can mean different things depending on the context. However, in the context that we're looking at today, the Google dictionary is technically right.

It's how society (specifically American society, at least for this article) has conditioned its inhabitants to believe that the buying and acquiring of material goods holds some kind of value other than the monetary value of the individual purchases. Like every time you contribute to the economy, there's a little video game ding above your head and Jeff Bezos' face appears to tell you that five points of value have been added to your status as an American citizen. Woo hoo!

This article will be a brief introduction to the evolution of American consumerism; something for your mind to gnaw on during the season of sales. If you're still in, congratulations. Let's learn about the economy we live in, and how it originally came to be.

The American Dream Machine: Why is the U.S. Like This?

Four score minus four years ago, (1945), the second World War was just wrapping up, nearly concluding the U.S.'s recovery from the Great Depression. While many European countries were falling into particularly rough patches in their economic history, the increased production of goods due to new factories built for wartime necessities and an overflowing workforce due to the soldiers returning to find women manning their posts all but gave the American economy a Redbull and a sugar cookie to pull it out of its slump.

The government was pumping out so many relief projects for families of soldiers that the rate of people moving out of cities to buy their own houses caused the suburbs to grow exponentially. With increased homeownership and more money flowing through the economy, it was only natural that the recently rejuvenated country wanted nothing more than to consume.

Throughout the late 40's and 50's, the government relied heavily on the high spending of its citizens. Luckily, many new inventions were coming out at this time, such as cars, televisions, microwaves, and refrigerators. With more TVs finding their way into homes, ad cam-

*"Let's talk about
consumerism."*

paigns were able to be taken to a whole other level. This was a breeding ground for many of the ideologies that we still maintain today, such as the notion that 'modernization' = the key to upward mobility.

Pretend you're a recently relocated family looking to impress your new white-picket fence neighbors. You decide that the only way to prove you're classy enough for the neighborhood is to buy that shiny new car they were advertising on channel two. Oh, and Susie and Joe next door have the latest lawn mower model, so you better get one of those, too. Fast-forward two years, the lawn mower still works, but Susie and Joe have upgraded theirs, and you mustn't appear too out-of-date. Now, go back to being you in the here and now. Does that story sound oddly familiar? No? When was the last time you heard of someone buying a new iPhone despite their old one working fine, or trying to 'dress to impress,' as if wearing nice clothes somehow equates to anything more than style.

The Modern Equivalent

The ideals present in our modern society are the same as the social pressures that prompted those newly-promoted middle class families to scramble after new technologies in order to prove themselves worthy of the golden age. Whether we like to admit it or not, we hate the idea of not being with the times, or feeling out of date. Technology is just one example of an industry that moves on quickly in order to keep their buyers buying. Fashion is another.

Sometimes, it can feel like wearing the right clothes with the right brand names and the right price tags is the only way to keep up to speed. If the trends stayed the same for too long, why would anyone want to buy new products? Of course, there are legitimate reasons to upgrade and consume, such as a piece of clothing falling apart, or a tech product breaking. But when one too many sweaters from your favorite online store start to unravel after practically no usage, one starts to wonder if the design flaws are really accidental. Utilizing cheap materials and means of production are a win-win for large corporations, because it takes significantly less money to make the products and their poor quality makes them liable to fall apart, causing buyers to buy in bulk and keep coming back for more.

Hopefully, you enjoyed learning about the origins of consumerism in America. To learn more, visit the sources of this article, *The Rise of American Consumerism* on pbs.org, and *Why Do We Buy What We Buy?* by Emily Stewart on vox.com.

With the holiday season in full swing, it's great to enjoy the tradition of gift-giving and receiving. But if we as Americans could put just an ounce more thought into what we consume regularly, the world might just be a slightly better place.

Be sure to read my next article on this topic, which will focus specifically on fast-fashion, the environmental impacts of high consumption, and the dark secrets behind cheap and popular brands. Thank you for reading!

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