

Les's Cranberry Sauce with Mandarin Oranges – Comfort du Jour

In the 35 years I've been cooking Thanksgiving dinners, one of my favorite things to make is cranberry sauce. Although I have the same fondness for the jelled cranberry of Ocean Spray fame that we all grew up with (you know, the kind you used the can opener on one end and punched two holes in the other end and secretly thrilled to the sucking sound as it plopped out onto a plate), I instinctively knew early on that there had to be a better way.

Initially I began to make fresh cranberry sauce by boiling the berries in water and adding sugar. I wanted more flavor, and in 2002, I hit the jackpot with a website recipe that adapted a version originally published in Cooking Light magazine. That means my batch for Thanksgiving 2021 will be the 20th year I've made this delicious concoction.

It's about sugar and apple cider (instead of water) offsetting the tart of the cranberries, and mandarin oranges adding back a different type of tart. If you make it, I guarantee you'll be hooked. It is even delicious spooned over vanilla ice cream.

INGREDIENTS

12-ounce bag of fresh cranberries
1 cup of white sugar* (see notes)
½ cup of brown sugar
1 cup of apple cider*
½ jar of mandarin oranges*

*NOTES

The original recipe called for 1½ cups of white sugar and ½ of brown sugar. I cut down the white sugar because it is plenty sweet. Either light or dark brown sugar works well.

Although I do typically use apple cider, the recipe certainly would work with water. Better yet if you can find it, as I've only been able to do a couple of times over the years, apple-cherry cider is the bomb!

I used half of a 23.5 ounce jar of Dole mandarin oranges; I like jars better because I feel that canned oranges have a "tell" of can flavor (coincidentally, not unlike Ocean Spray jelled cranberry sauce).

INSTRUCTIONS

Combine all ingredients, except Mandarin oranges, in a medium saucepan on medium heat and bring to a simmering boil over the course of 15 to 20 minutes. Turn down heat as cranberries begin to pop and work a spoon around the outside of the pot, crushing them into a sauce. When all berries have popped, remove from heat and cool, then refrigerate for an hour. Then, add the mandarin oranges to the slightly gelled sauce and refrigerate again until ready to serve.