

Burst of Reporting on Aronia Berries as New Superfood

The Aronia berry is catching on. This summer, an Associated Press news story was picked up by a number of major news outlets to report on the emergence of the Aronia berry as a new “superfood” and the strongest of antioxidant fruits. Aronia berries are native to North America, but have only recently begun to be recognized as an important nutritional source. According to the article, the beginning of the new Aronia berry trend in the U.S. can be traced back to 1997, with the planting of 200 bushes in Iowa. Now, Aronia berry farmers produce millions of pounds of the berry each year, and hundreds of products containing the antioxidant are showing up on store shelves in the U.S. and overseas.



Aronia berry can be found in more than 440 products now!

Major News Outlets Cover AP Story about Aronia Berries

CBS News, using pieces of the AP article, reported the Aronia berry recently underwent a “rebranding” to overcome its reputation as a tart fruit. The article includes quotes from Andrew Pittz of Sawmill Hollow in Iowa. His parents were the ones who planted the notable 200 bushes in 1997 marking the beginning of the trend. Pittz said he planted Aronia bushes in all 99 Iowa counties last year, and he hopes the Aronia berry becomes to Iowa what peaches are to Georgia. The article reported that the Aronia berry is now being promoted by the University of Iowa as a value-added crop.

The *Des Moines Register* referred to the Sawmill Hollow story and also shared information about producers and the growing industry. According to the article, one small producer increased production in one year from 1,000 to 5,000 pounds with the same number bushes. This shows the prolific nature of the bushes. As they mature, they produce many more berries, which makes them a great crop for growers. The article lists benefits of the berry for farmers: hardiness, sustainability without chemicals, scale for local producers and nutritional value.

Other news outlets sharing parts of the AP story included *USA Today*, Fox News, *New York Daily News* and *The Atlantic* (online publication associated with *The Atlantic Monthly*). Other articles featuring the berry have appeared in *The Wall Street Journal* and other respected national publications.

Interesting Aronia Berry Facts

The articles based on the AP story shared the following interesting facts about the berry and its beginning in Iowa:

- The *Journal of Agriculture and Food Chemistry* published research showing the Aronia berry's antioxidant strength is one of the highest values ever recorded for a fruit.
- The 2013 University of Nebraska-Lincoln Food Processing Center's Product Traffic Report shows more than 440 new products containing the Aronia berry—60 of them in the U.S.: juice, supplement powders, baby food and many wines and other drinks.
- The price per pound for the berry, in a young, not-yet-stable industry, runs from fifty cents to \$7.50.
- A mature bush (four or five years old) produces about 20 pounds of fruit a year.
- A couple of news organizations based specifically on the Aronia berry are now tracking production and economic impact of the berry.
- The name of the fruit is derived from its genus name, *Aronia melanocarpa*. Its common name, chokeberry, reflects the tartness of the berry and has been abandoned for the more favorable genus-based name.

Several of this summer's articles reminded readers that studies have indicated antioxidants assist in improving health, but our understanding is still developing and it hasn't been proven they prevent diseases. It's hoped future medical and scientific studies will show antioxidants fight the development of disease in the human body on a cellular level. For those who want to test the theory that antioxidants improve health or develop products to support it, Aronia berry products might be a perfect source.

References:

CBS News: <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/aronia-berry-rebranding-helps-a-new-superfood-catch-on/>

New York Daily News: <http://www.nydailynews.com/life-style/eats/aronia-berry-gaining-market-foothold-u-s-article-1.1866130>

USA Today: <http://www.usatoday.com/story/money/business/2014/07/12/aronia-berry-gaining-market-foothold-in-us/12571761/>

The Wall Street Journal:

<http://online.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424127887323823004578595610077083082>

Des Moines Register: <http://www.desmoinesregister.com/story/life/home-garden/2014/09/02/aronia-berries-health-benefits/14954085/>

Anthocyanin Anthem: Singing Praises of Natural Antioxidants

Although science hasn't completely sorted out all the benefits (or non-benefits) of antioxidants, we have enough evidence indicating the potential benefits of these important compounds to justify an earnest search for foods with highest concentrations of them. That's one reason you'll find antioxidant fiends the world over regularly indulging in red wine and dark chocolate. Other reasons, of course, are flavor and, well, let's call it "a little cloud of peace and contentment." One of the most interesting of all the antioxidants are anthocyanins.

Most Powerful Antioxidant Punch

You might not know it, but you see anthocyanins every day in flowers, plants and foods that range in color from orange to purple, including red leaves on trees in the fall. In fact, the anthocyanin in these plants and fruits produces the color. Biologists list a number of varied reasons for anthocyanins that range from an ability to protect trees from drying out in the winter to a ability to dissuade animals used to eating green plants from feeding on the brighter colored anthocyanic plants.

For humans, anthocyanin (a flavonoid) has been shown to provide benefits ranging from improving visual acuity and inhibiting cancer tumor formation to protecting against heart attacks by strengthening capillaries and making them more permeable. They have also been said to increase memory and prevent age-related neural decline. In fact, foods rich in anthocyanins have long been used in folk medicine.

According to studies cited in a flyer published by the Pennington Biomedical Research Center at Louisiana State University, the benefits of anthocyanins might have something to do with the fact that they are highly bioavailable. In other words, unlike some compounds that are excreted before they can be used, anthocyanins can be easily absorbed by the body and put to use. Read more of Pennington's findings here: http://www.pbrc.edu/training-and-education/pdf/pns/pns_anthocyanins.pdf.



The choke berry (aronia berry) has the largest amount of anthocyanins of any other berry.

Berries are Berry, Berry Good to Us

In 2004, the Journal of Agricultural Food Chemicals published a scientific study showing aronia berries (chokeberries) held the highest concentration of anthocyanins of any other berries.

You also can find anthocyanin in berries such as blueberry, cranberry, bilberry, black raspberry, red raspberry, blackberry, black currant, cherry and Concord grape. Other plants rich in anthocyanins include eggplant peel, black rice, Muscatine grape, violet petals and red cabbage. One study showed red-fleshed peaches contain large amounts of anthocyanin. You will find other studies and types of anthocyanin-containing foods in Wikipedia's article:

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anthocyanin>.

Anthocyanins in your Diet

One of the unique characteristics of anthocyanins is that amounts vary widely in different foods. Today's Dietician reports that Red Delicious apples provide more anthocyanins than Fuji apples. Red wine contains enough to provide cardiovascular benefits, but black currant and blood orange juice do not provide any cardiovascular effects, in spite of being full of anthocyanins. Read more about this in the well-cited article at

<http://www.todaysdietitian.com/newarchives/030314p20.shtml>.

The scientific, medical and nutrition communities will continue doing studies to sort out the facts and determine more exact ways to estimate benefits of anthocyanins. In the meantime, many professionals believe the potential benefits make it worth adding anthocyanin-rich foods and supplements to your diet.

Do you need a better reason to consume a daily ration of juicy berries with your chocolate and wine?

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