



# Currants

I have to admit currants can be a little puzzling at first. They can be found in three colors, red, white and black, each with distinct flavor. White are particularly mild; red are bright and tart and with traditional currant flavor; and black have a hint of musk that lends itself to a sweetened juice. If you have tried to eat currants out of hand you will notice that they have an exceedingly tart and intense flavors compared to the lazy-sweet strawberry. The currant is highly prized by the French who have used currants in every course of a meal to classic results. The currant syrup recipe below can be used to make a Kir Harmoniale Cocktail (5 parts champagne and 1 part syrup). I used the syrup in a vinaigrette served with an arugula salad topped with shaved fennel, Fantome chevre, and Allen Creek smoked trout. Later in the week, I glazed a roasted pork tenderloin with the syrup a few

minutes before removing it from the oven. Currants pair very nicely with pork, lamb, venison and duck, and are the major ingredient in the widely used brown sauce known as Cumberland Sauce. Of course the syrup can be used in elegant desserts. Try a red currant sorbet or just drizzle some syrup over other fresh summer fruit and serve with a dollop of freshly whipped cream.

Jordan Lichman

## RED CURRANT SYRUP

1 cup granulated sugar  
½ cup water  
1 pint red currants

1. Bring sugar and water to a boil. Add currants (stems and all) and return to a boil.
2. Boil the currants for 2 minutes. Remove from heat and gently press any unbroken berries against the side of the pot using the back of a spoon. Let the berries steep in the syrup for 30 minutes.
3. Strain out stems and seeds and store refrigerated until ready to use. The syrup should keep for at least one month.

## RED CURRANT VINAIGRETTE

Makes about 1 cup

¼ cup red currant syrup  
2 Tablespoons Champagne vinegar  
¼ teaspoon salt  
¼ teaspoon black pepper  
¾ cup vegetable oil

1. Combine all ingredients in a jar or well sealed plastic container and shake vigorously to emulsify. Serve immediately or refrigerate for up to a month.



# A Midwestern Palette - Eating With the Seasons

Though many fresh foods are available year round, our regional agricultural community, and the urban communities surrounded by them, benefit when we choose to eat seasonally, from local producers. Knowing the seasonality of our favorite produce allows us to make informed choices.

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
						Currant Season					

Here in the Midwest, currants come and go quickly. The traditional red berries ripen earliest; white and black currants ripen toward the season's end.

## Preparation and Storage Tips

Currants are long-keeping berries. If you don't wash them, they will store for a couple of weeks in the refrigerator. Once washed, they should be used promptly.

Most recipes ask you to slip the stem off the berries, but in some cases you can leave them on during cooking and strain them out later.

Europeans have long valued the intense tartness of currants in classic red or dark currant jellies and as a delicious pie filling. Did you know that dried currants are actually dried champagne grapes?

### ZUCCHINI-CURRANT PANCAKES

- |                              |   |
|------------------------------|---|
| 2 cups all purpose flour     | 1 1/2 cups buttermilk   |
| 1 teaspoon baking powder     | 1/2 cup fresh currants  |
| 1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon | 3 large eggs  |
| 1/2 teaspoon salt            | 3/4 cup vegetable oil + some additional                       |
| 1/4 cup sugar                | 1 medium zucchini, grated, squeezed to remove excess moisture |
| 1 teaspoon baking soda       |   |
| 1/2 teaspoon ground allspice |   |

Preheat oven to 200°F. Whisk first 7 ingredients in large bowl. Whisk buttermilk, 3/4 cup oil and eggs in medium bowl. Add to dry ingredients and mix just until blended but still lumpy. Fold in zucchini and currants.

Heat griddle or heavy large skillet over medium heat. Brush lightly with vegetable oil. Working in batches, pour batter by 1/3 cupfuls onto griddle, spacing apart. Cook until bottoms are golden, about 2 minutes. Turn and cook until second sides are golden and pancakes are cooked through, about 2 minutes. Transfer to baking sheet; keep warm in oven. Serve hot with butter and syrup.

Makes 12 pancakes.

### BASMATI RICE SALAD WITH CURRANTS AND NUTS

- 4 cups water
- 2 cups brown basmati rice
- 1 1/3 cups thinly sliced green onions
- 1 1/2 cups thinly sliced celery
- 3/4 cup minced fresh parsley
- 3/4 cup chopped pecans
- 1/2 cup fresh currants
- 1/2 cup chopped walnuts
- 5 tablespoons olive oil
- 5 tablespoons lemon juice
- 3 tablespoons soy sauce
- 2 1/2 teaspoons ground cumin

Combine water and rice in large saucepan. Bring to boil. Cover; reduce heat and simmer until tender, about 35 minutes. Transfer rice to large bowl. Fluff with fork. Cool. Mix in green onions, celery, parsley, pecans, currants and walnuts.

Whisk olive oil, lemon juice, soy sauce and cumin in small bowl to blend. Pour over rice salad; toss to coat. Salt and pepper to taste and serve.

**Harmony Valley Farm** is a family owned farm in western Wisconsin, dedicated to producing high quality, beautifully clean, and deliciously fresh certified organic produce. Our farming methods protect the environment and enhance diversity.