

All Things Cranberry creatively lives up to its name

What do you wanna bet the Pilgrims didn't insist on seeing the ridges of a can impressed in their cranberry sauce — unlike my family, who once again ignored my beautiful bowl of lovely, fresh cranberries made with pineapples, mandarin oranges and Queen Anne cherries as it sat regally next to the cylindrical gelatinous mess they kept asking others to pass last week.

TASTE OF N.J.



BROOKE TARABOUR

How can you call this stuff cranberries? I wanted to scream.

Once I calmed down, I started to think about it rationally. Cranberries are a really lovely fruit — a little tart, a little sweet, a beautiful color — and they're extremely versatile. They certainly deserve more respect than mashing them into an unidentifiable substance. And aside from the fact cranberries can add spark to most any recipe, they're suddenly trendy — just take a look at all the cookbooks, magazines and TV cooking shows featuring the little darlings.

So the idea of today's column is to get you thinking about using cranberries all year long, and the perfect place to find "All Things Cranberry," is a new shop in Monmouth Beach named exactly that. In this small, pretty place with delicious food, absolutely everything is made with fresh cranberries, dried cranberries or is cranberry-infused.

All Things Cranberry is the brainchild of Clarisse Persanyi, a seasoned Wall Street international banker who has combined her research, development and analytical experience with a passion for the little red berry. "We're a gourmet food company dedicated to the art of cranberry creations," she says.

Persanyi really used her business savvy when she hired Holly Miller as the shop's pastry chef. Miller has a deft hand, and while I didn't taste any of the salsas,

Getting there: From the Garden State Parkway, take exit 105 (Eatontown/Route 36). Take Route 36 east to Ocean Avenue. At the fourth light, make a left onto Beach Road. The shop is in the Village Square on the left side of Beach Road.



Where: 36 Beach Road
Village Square #12
Monmouth Beach
(732) 870-8866

Hours: Monday, Wednesday-Saturday, 8 a.m.-6 p.m.
Sunday, 8 a.m.-1:30 p.m.
Closed Tuesday

THE STAR-LEDGER

ite, soft and crusty pistachio biscotti (89 cents), with just a hint of lemon and vanilla. Scones (\$1.25) are big at All Things Cranberry. I loved the moist, creamy cranberry/orange/white chocolate one, made with fresh orange zest. Other flavors include cranberries, of course, along with pumpkin spice, cinnamon pecan, apricot and lemon cornmeal.

Persanyi has a great sense of humor — she describes her Sacher torte (\$18.75) as "Blue Danube meets the bogs." The stellar hazelnut chocolate cake has a traditional chocolate glaze, and a layer of cranberry puree.

If you like muffins, try the cinnamon pecan (\$1.25), pumpkin spice or apricot — all with dried cranberries and all worth a taste. By the way, there are samples of some products out, so you can see which one you like best before you buy.

You can't eat all this good stuff without something to drink, and yup, you guessed it, even the drinks at All Things Cranberry are just that. I tried something called FUZE, a really good diet juice with grapefruit, but there are at least half a dozen choices, including cranberry-flavored coffee.

Pretty pies and tortes are called

well, all things cranberry.

Me too, especially if you keep it fresh, keep trying new ways to use them, and conveniently forget to buy the canned stuff. That way, your family — and maybe even mine — will discover how much fun you can have eating real cranberries, long after the leftovers are gone.

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DANIEL HEDDEN/FOR THE STAR-LEDGER

Pastry chef Holly Miller prepares a Sacher torte batter at All Things Cranberry in Monmouth Beach.

traveling so much, her singing took a back burner.

In 1985, she bought a weekend house in Oceanport, and last year, she moved there full-time. It was in Oceanport she really started working with cranberries. A child of Hungarian immigrants, her mother and grandmother were "superior bakers," Persanyi says. "A lot of my cranberry recipes are drawn from or modified from their traditional dishes."

She got really serious and started product development in October 2002; by last Christmas, she knew she wanted a shop that only sold cranberry products. In a few months, she had located this space in the small Village Square shopping center, started construction, met and hired Miller and opened in September.

For now, All Things Cranberry is a retail, wholesale, manufacturing, Web-based and mail order business. In the coming year, Persanyi wants to add an export component to the mix. She believes there's a lot of call out there for,

cranberries all year long, and the perfect place to find "All Things Cranberry," is a new shop in Monmouth Beach named exactly that. In this small, pretty place with delicious food, absolutely everything is made with fresh cranberries, dried cranberries or is cranberry-infused.

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Persanyi really used her business savvy when she hired Holly Miller as the shop's pastry chef. Miller has a deft hand, and while I didn't taste any of the salsas, sauces and other products you can purchase at All Things Cranberry, I did have a chance to sample her superb baked goods.

By the time you get to Monmouth Beach, there will be more bakery items available — Miller and Persanyi are constantly experimenting — but during my visit, there were plenty of treats to choose from.

Coconut macaroons (\$4.50 for 6) are creamy and intense, with a surprise in the middle — well maybe not a surprise. It's a cranberry, of course. Macaroons also come in chocolate, and there are also cranberry/chocolate bonbons, hazelnut clusters and truffles.

As for the brownies and dessert bars, naturally each has cranberries in the recipe, so I won't keep repeating that. But an excellent Key lime bar (\$1.89) with an almond and butter crust and a layer of you-know-what is a cross between a custard and a cake. There are nine-layer bars, almond fudge brownies, almond cookies, orange cookies, orange pecan cookies and my favor-

torte (\$18.75) as "Blue Danube meets the bogs." The stellar hazelnut chocolate cake has a traditional chocolate glaze, and a layer of cranberry puree.

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Pretty pies and tortes are called "velvets and silks" here, because Persanyi and Miller started with a French silk pie recipe, put down a layer of chocolate (silk) and topped it with mousse (velvet).

These are only made to order with 24-hour notice, but once you've tried a sample, you'll be back for a whole one. They come in peanut butter with a layer of cranberry puree, cranberry vanilla, fresh banana and pumpkin spice (\$10.75).

On the shelves are cranberry trail mixes, granolas, jelly beans, condiments and beautiful bottles of vinegars. If you like your cranberries covered in chocolate, they're here, too, and if someone on your holiday list really loves cranberries, you can put together a fun gift basket.

Persanyi was born and raised in Cleveland, where she was trained in classical music. She moved to Manhattan to pursue a singing career in light opera, but she needed a day job to support her music and chose banking. That took off faster than she expected, and soon she was

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