

# PortlandTribune

## Hot Lips Soda taps cranberry bogs

*Project greens-up growing practices, produces tasty drink*

BY STEVE LAW

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**A three-year demonstration project designed to show how Oregon cranberry growers can make money while greening-up their agricultural practices has borne fruit, or in this case, a new fruit drink.**

It's called Hot Lips Cranberry Soda.

The new carbonated soda is made from fresh cranberries, pear juice and water, with no high-fructose corn syrup, concentrates or other additives, says David Yudkin, co-owner of Portland's Hot Lips Pizza and its sister enterprise, Hot Lips Soda.

"It's a way more expensive way to do it," he says, but "the flavors are really unique."

Soon after his first batch was bottled in April, the cranberry soda was on the menu at Chez Panisse, Alice Waters' famed Berkeley, Calif. restaurant, after Yudkin sent her some samples. It's also sold locally, for around \$2.50 a bottle.

Three years ago, the Oregon Environmental Council set out to do a demonstration project with cranberry growers on Oregon's south coast, says Allison Hensey, who directs the group's healthy food and farms program.

"We have over 200 growers; it's a major industry down there," Hensey says. But it's not so kind to salmon and other critters that depend on clean rivers.

Cranberries are grown in bogs, and the chemicals used by growers ultimately wind up polluting nearby rivers, Hensey says.

Many Oregon cranberry farmers also are enduring a challenging economic environment. "The commodity price for the cranberries the last two years has been terrible," Hensey says. "They're losing money."

In collaboration with the South Coast Watershed Council, she worked with three cranberry growers open to trying more environmentally friendly practices, including Scott McKenzie and the newly formed Clearwater Cranberries line of fruit.

Their cranberries use only low-impact pesticides that are certified as sustainable by Portland's Food Alliance, Hensey says.



Aaron McKenzie (left), Adam McKenzie and Regent McKenzie work on the 2009 cranberry harvest for Seaview Cranberries.

COURTESY OF OREGON ENVIRONMENTAL COUNCIL

Oregon Environmental Council linked the growers with Portland-area businesses keen on providing healthier and more locally sourced foods.

The new source of Food Alliance-certified cranberries matched Hot Lips' goal of buying fresh produce from Northwest growers, Yudkin says. The farmers keep possession of the cranberries until Hot Lips takes them, assuring quality control and eliminating the middleman, he says.

By changing their practices to respect the environment, cranberry growers are getting roughly five to seven times the prevailing price for their fruit on the commodity market, Hensey says. "There are people losing their farms, and these are people figuring out how to make it work."

Bottles of the soda are labeled to show the source and variety of the cranberries, something not possible when cranberry farmers sell their product on the commodity market.

Yudkin, who sells seven other flavors of Hot Lips Sodas, says the flavors are richer when he can use the whole fruit, and not concentrate.

Bottling of Hot Lips Sodas is done in Newberg. The bottles are made in Portland from recycled glass, and the labels are made locally as well, Hensey says.