

# Using Social Media to Tell the Story of Cranberry Farming in BC

by Sharon Goatley

*The cranberry industry in BC is quite different from other types of farming – most consumers don't see the fresh product on the shelves except within a narrow time-frame at Christmas, they usually have little understanding of how cranberries are cultivated except that bogs are in some way involved, and their old recipe books often don't feature cranberry recipes. However, there is a growing trend towards food awareness with many consumers increasingly interested in the health benefits of what they eat, whether it's produced in an ecologically sound way, and whether local farmers are benefitting from their grocery purchase. An example of this is a growing trend for grocery stores to not only identify what country or province fresh produce is grown in but even which family or organization grows it!*

## Connections

BC cranberries are healthy, they taste great, a majority of BC cranberries are processed and marketed by a farmer co-operative (Ocean Spray) and they are becoming a common ingredient in bakeries and restaurants as well as the baking isle of grocery stores. Perhaps it is time for cranberry farmers to tell their story, to help the public understand and build a connection to us?

## How Best to Tell Our Story?

To quote a recent article originally published in the Ontario Farmer in May 2013: "The latest Ipsos Reid study about Canadian attitudes towards food and farming, commissioned by Farm & Food Care ... showed that for the youngest demographic that represents the next generation of consumers, the Internet is their preferred source of information."

This tells us that, if we want to tell our story, an effective means of communicating is through the Internet. Websites are a good way to lay a foundation of information but they tend to be static and don't generate the excitement that social media often does. A bonus is that social media tools are often free and can help you express your creative side!

Following is an overview of some of the social media tools you might consider.

## Facebook

Facebook is a well-established yet constantly evolving social media tool. It is very good at keeping people up-to-date because Facebook postings are shown on your Facebook Page in reverse chronological order. Most often, the content is viewed the day you post it or your friends may scroll back a few days to see what you've posted recently.

One of the things that makes Facebook “social” is that many people check their Facebook pages daily, or a few times a week, as a way of keeping-in-touch. Facebook is great for a paragraph or two, and don’t forget to add that eye-catching photo, but don’t write a Pulitzer Prize Winning essay here!

There are two main ways to establish a presence on Facebook: a “profile” or a business page (commonly call a “fan” page). Most of us use a profile – it allows us to post information about ourselves and to “friend” others so that we can see their information and to communicate with them. A business page doesn’t have “friends” – it has “fans” and people don’t have to ask to be your friend to see your page. If you tell your story through Facebook it’s likely you will want to start a business page.

When you log into your Facebook account you will see what your friends, or Facebook Pages you have “liked” by pressing the “like” button on their page, have been posted recently – this is called your “newsfeed.” If you stop liking them just go to their page and press “unlike”!

There is a lot of Facebook-specific jargon but it all makes sense very quickly.

*If you would like to read about how to begin with Facebook you may wish to visit <http://www.gcfllearnfree.org/facebook101/1>*

## Blogging

I’m sure you’ve heard of “blogging”, there are commonly references to someone’s “blog” or that someone “blogged” about this or that. In fact, I’ll bet you’ve visited a blog recently without even knowing it. Often a Google

search along the lines of “how to remove cranberry juice from my best shirt” will take you to a webpage where someone else has asked that question and other people have replied with suggestions – that’s an example of a blog!

Blogs are actually a type of website or are part of a website. In fact “blog” is a shortening of the term “web log”, which is a dead giveaway for what blogs were most often originally used for – keeping a diary or digital log book. Due to the way blogs are built internally, where you never need to venture, they are very good at organizing information and they are now often used to publish articles or commentary (“posts”) which can be categorized and searched. You can decide whether visitors to

your blog can comment on your posts.

You can either add a blog to your website or you can set up an account with sites such as Tumblr, WordPress or Blogger. Blogging isn’t just a passing fancy – it’s been around for a long time and, according to tumblr’s statistics, as I write this, they have 130 million blogs with over 57 million posts!

And, by-the-way, a blog is indeed a possible location for your Pulitzer Prize Winning essay as the people who visit blogs are often targeting a particular interest and they are more willing to read through reams of text than the average web surfer is.

*You can find a blogging tutorial at <http://www.gcfllearnfree.org/blogbasics?search=blogging>*

## Twitter

Twitter is a micro-blog network that allows you to broadcast short messages (140 characters or less). You can also choose to “follow” other

Twitter users, allowing you to read their messages (called “tweets”). Unlike most websites and even Facebook, Twitter was designed to work well on cell phones and interaction can be very quick and generate a lot of buzz, especially if your followers pass along your message to their own followers (this is called a “retweet”).

The news that you just found a wonderful gluten-free cranberry recipe on a certain website or that you started harvesting today would both be interesting tweets. This is no place for that Pulitzer Prize Winning essay but maybe a Haiku?

Twitter is great for people who love interaction ... now!

*One source of more information on Twitter is <https://support.twitter.com/articles/215585#>*

## Pinterest

Pinterest is a website where you can share your photos, or look at photos others have posted. The pin-board style that Pinterest features makes it very easy to use. According to Wikipedia, in mid-July 2013 Pinterest had 70 million users world-wide.

Google increasingly likes Pinterest content and you will now often find that image searches will take you to Pinterest. Pinterest is excellent at leading people to your Facebook page, webpage, blog or a related site with more in-depth information.

*Some basic information is available on <http://about.pinterest.com/basics/>*

## Playing Together

Most social media tools such as Facebook, Twitter and Pinterest play well together – increasingly so. In many ways, your choice of tool(s) will depend both upon your personality and your message. At first it may be confusing but you’ll get the hang of it quickly. Make sure you have a plan or goals set before you begin, dip your toes in the stream of Internet social media and enjoy!

*This and other resources may be found on the  
BC Cranberry Marketing Commission’s website:  
[www.bccranberries.com](http://www.bccranberries.com)*

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