

THE ASTOUNDING, ASTONISHING & AMAZING AVOCADO



Today we want to tell you about another healthy item you *must* have on your food list. **THE AVOCADO**

Did you know the avocado is a fruit and not a vegetable? And it sure isn't one of the prettier ones. Sometimes they're called alligator pears because of their shape and their greenish brown skin with its rough outer texture. The Hass avocado, grown in California, has the alligator skin. The shiny ones come from Florida. But no matter

what they look like, they're all delicious and so good for you.

The largest avocado available in stores is the "Avozilla" which is grown in South Africa. They typically weigh about 3 pounds each. And the skin is so thick that once you get the pit and the flesh out, you can use the skin as a serving bowl. The largest avocado ever grown is on record as being 4.8 pounds. Holy guacamole! That's a whole lot of avocado, right?

Avocados were originally from Central and South America and have been grown there since 8,000 B.C. They were introduced to Jamaica in the mid-17th century and then spread through the Asian tropical regions one hundred years later. In the early 20th century they began growing them in California and Florida. Now most tropical and subtropical countries grow them.

People used to think that avocados were "bad" because they're high on fat. It is true that they're almost 85% fat, but that 85% is actually very healthy. The avocado fat offers unique health benefits just like walnuts and flaxseeds. It's also low on carbohydrates and sugar. One cup of avocado provides 7-8 grams of dietary fiber. Avocados don't have any sodium or cholesterol, and they help regulating your blood sugar. One-fifth of a medium sized avocado has almost 20 vitamins and minerals. It also makes a great food for babies, because it's so creamy and smooth. They are loved by vegetarians and vegans too. Avocados are part of the Super Food Family ... and if you ask me I think the avocado deserves a cape and a super hero suit.

To figure out if your avocado is ripe or not, give it a light squeeze. A ripe one will be slightly soft but won't have any cracks or dark sunken spots. If you buy ones that are firmer, they'll ripen once you get them home. You can put them in a fruit bowl, leave them on the counter or put them in a paper bag. But don't put them in the refrigerator until they're ripe. And if you've already opened one and haven't used it all, put it in a plastic bag and sprinkle some lemon on it to keep it from turning black.

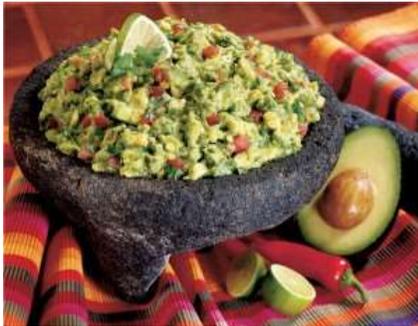
It's ripe, but how do I get in there?

Put away your vegetable peeler. Use a small knife and cut the avocado in half lengthwise. Then you twist the two halves in opposite direction to separate them. To safely remove the pit, scoop it out with a spoon. Ideally, you want to *gently* remove the flesh from the skin by peeling the skin back with your fingers. But you can also use the spoon for this by just sliding it around, between the flesh and the skin, until all of the flesh is loose. The best and healthiest part of the flesh is just underneath the skin, so don't forget about that part.



Avocados keep their nutrients best if you eat them raw and not cooked. You can add an avocado to a dish that has already been cooked, and it will warm with the other food. But cooking the avocado for too long will turn it bitter.

People are using avocados in just about everything. They use them in wraps, smoothies, on top of eggs, in salads, on sandwiches and lots of Mexican food. They're even used in chocolate chip cookies and banana bread. It's up to you and your imagination.



The number one thing avocados are used for is guacamole. On Super Bowl Sunday, Americans consume over *8 million pounds* of avocados. You can add tomatoes, onions and hot sauce then use tortilla chips or potato chips to scoop it out. Or you can just use a spoon while you politely elbow everyone else out of the way. For Cinco de Mayo, Americans eat about *14 million pounds* of avocados. (To learn how to make Willy's special guacamole, check out the "Avocado Video" in the video section.)



And don't forget that avocados can offer you a great start to the day. Something as simple as a mashed avocado on whole-wheat bread with tomatoes and a teeny bit of lemon should get everyone going. You can add an egg on the side if you'd like.

A few people are allergic to avocados; it can affect those with tree-pollen allergies and latex allergies too. Avocado leaves, bark, skin, or pit are documented to be harmful to animals. The avocado fruit is poisonous to some birds, and the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) lists it as toxic to many animals including cats, dogs, guinea pigs, horses, etc. **So kids, please don't feed avocados to ANY of your pets! Just because it's good for you doesn't mean it is good for them.**

How do you eat avocados? Do you have any special recipes?
Please let us know so we can share them with other kids.



By HOLLY WHITE