

Holy guacamole is good for your health (460)

(NC)–The exotic and temperate destination favoured by many Canadian travelers is also the ancient birthplace of one of our healthiest and most delicious fruits. Avocados originated in Mexico between 7,000 and 5,000 B.C. and were revered by the Aztecs as a fertility fruit. After centuries of perfecting their cultivation methods, the Mexican avocado – also known as the ‘alligator pear’ for its dark and pebbly skin – continues to flourish and is renowned for its rich, delicious flavour and high nutritional value.

These days, the glorious green globes are surging in popularity as increasing numbers of people realize the impressive health benefits loaded into these small packages. While the Aztecs were content to consume the avocado as a mash – otherwise known as guacamole – today’s savvy consumers are discovering many new and diverse ways to eat and serve the mild-mannered avocado.

“It’s true that avocados contain a fair amount of fat, but it is of the health-protective monounsaturated variety, the same kind that is found in olives and nuts, and has been shown to lower cholesterol levels,” says Cara Rosenbloom, registered dietitian and director of clinical nutrition at MDDirect in Toronto.

Better heart health is a natural by-product of consuming more avocados, says Ms. Rosenbloom, since they have the highest fibre content of any fruit (9 grams), and are low in sodium and high in potassium, two critical factors for regulating blood pressure levels. The good news about avocados and their healthy fat properties doesn’t end there. Studies have suggested that the fats in avocados may aid the absorption of carotenoids (antioxidants) in other vegetables, another good reason to include them in salads and salsas.

“Avocados are great for babies and children,” says Ms. Rosenbloom, “because they provide the much-needed good fat that promotes healthy growth and development.” The smooth texture and limey-green colour of avocados also make them the perfect kid-friendly food.

The food that earned avocado its reputation as a rich, creamy dish is of course guacamole.

Everybody loves guacamole, and everyone has an opinion as to what an authentic guacamole should be. Whether you like it chunky or smooth, with chile and onion or without, the key to making a great guac is to use authentic ingredients, starting with ripe avocados from Mexico.

To the uninitiated, avocados can seem exotic and decadent, too sensuous for the ordinary eater. Think again. Few foods are as versatile as avocados: they add flavour and texture to casual snack foods, they are delicious in soup or a salad, they are a wonderful replacement for the fat in chocolate mousse or cupcakes, and are superb layered on a piece of toast with a slice of tomato and piece of cheese.

“I tell my clients that avocados are in season year-round and they present an exciting opportunity to try something new,” says Ms. Rosenbloom, who never misses a chance to put avocados in salads, dips and in place of butter on toast. “As soon as you try them, you’ll love them and want to keep eating them.”

To learn more about how to cook with and serve avocados from Mexico, try out the recipes below and go to www.missavacado.com

Classic Guacamole (300 words)

(NC)—A classic guacamole recipe is a staple for any host. To mix it up, play with the heat – turn it up by adding more peppers, or for a milder taste cut back. Once you know the basics, it’s easy.



1 cup	diced sweet onion	250 mL
1/4 cup	minced, seeded jalapeño peppers (about two peppers)	50 mL
3	ripe avocados from Mexico, peeled, pitted and diced	3
1/4 cup	chopped fresh cilantro	50 mL
3 tbsp	fresh lime juice	45 mL
2 tsp	minced garlic	10 mL
1 tsp	coarse salt	5 mL
1/2 tsp	fresh cracked pepper	2 mL

In medium bowl, combine onion, jalapeño peppers and avocados. Stir to combine. Sprinkle with cilantro, lime juice, garlic, salt and pepper, mix thoroughly. Serve with crisp tortilla chips and extra lime wedges. Best if enjoyed within one day.

Makes about 2 cups.

Tip: For extra kick, leave the seeds in the pepper.

How to select avocados

- In the grocery store, you should select avocados based on their colour. If you want to consume them right away, you should be looking for avocados that are not too green and have a dark, almost black skin (don’t squeeze them, this bruises the avocado).
- If you don’t plan to eat them for a couple of days, buy green avocados and place them on the counter in a paper bag with a banana or apple for a day or two until they ripen. Ripe avocados will be dark in colour and soft when gently pressed.
- If you really don’t want to have to plan ahead, buy avocados every time you visit the grocery store – that way you’ll always have a ripe one on hand whenever you get a craving. Ripe avocados can be refrigerated for up to a week.

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Avocado Mango Salsa

(NC)—The mango adds a sweet and lively twist to this spicy salsa. Delicious with chicken or fish, or on its own with soft corn tortillas.

2	ripe avocados from Mexico, peeled, pitted and diced	2
1	ripe mango, peeled and diced	1
1 cup	diced tomato	250
mL		
1/4 cup	chopped cilantro	50
mL		
2 tbsp	chopped red onion	30
mL		
1 tbsp	minced jalapeño pepper	15 mL
1 tsp	minced garlic	5 mL
1/2 tsp	salt	2 mL



1/8 tsp	ground black pepper	0.5 mL
1 tbsp	lime juice	15 mL
1 tbsp	olive oil	15 mL

In bowl, combine avocados, mango, tomato, cilantro, onion, jalapeño, garlic, salt, pepper, lime juice and olive oil; toss gently. Serve, if desired, with sliced veggies and chips, in a stemmed glass with shrimp or with grilled chicken or fish.

Yield: 3 cups

Source: www.missavacado.com

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