



By Peggy Crum, RD, Health4U Nutritionist

Avocados have a nickname—alligator pear, aptly descriptive of an avocado's shape and thick leathery skin. But don't be deceived by its rough exterior. Cut one open to find a rich, creamy delight inside:

- Cut into the avocado until your knife hits the pit; keep the blade edge on the pit while turning the avocado, cutting it lengthwise through both ends.
- Twist gently to separate it into halves.
- Place the half with the pit on a flat surface. Don't hold onto it. Tap the sharp edge of your knife into the pit.
- Hold the avocado half steady, and then turn the knife blade slightly to loosen and lift out the pit.
- The soft pulp is ready for you to scoop with a spoon. For chunks or slices, wait to scoop it until you have scored the pulp with the tip of a paring knife.
- Use right away, or drizzle with lime juice to keep the pulp from turning brown.

An avocado is perfectly ripe for just a short time. To select a ripe one, do the squeeze test. If it gives slightly to a gentle pressure, it's ripe. Ripe avocados will keep about 2 days at room temperature or 4 days in the refrigerator. Stored at room temperature, unripe avocados will be ready to use in about 2 days.

While there are nearly 500 varieties of avocados, the Hass is the most common type grown in California and is the one we find most often in the market. The Hass is known for its skin that turns from green when unripe to dark purple when ripe, and for its nutty flavor. Available year round, its peak season is spring and summer.

Beyond guacamole, avocados make an excellent salad ingredient, a fresh addition to sandwiches or burgers, and a delicious spread just as it is. Once disparagingly called poor man's butter, we now know that the avocado is an integral part of the Mediterranean diet.

RECIPE for health

APRIL 2013

featured food:
AVOCADO

Southwest Goddess Dressing

Recipe developed by Corporate Chef Kurt Kwiatkowski and featured in Residential Dining Services. Makes 3 cups.

- 3 cloves garlic
- ½ cup shallots, large dice
- 2 avocados, pulp only, large dice
- 2-3 Tablespoons fresh lime juice
- ¼ cup sherry vinegar
- 2 teaspoons cumin powder
- ¼ teaspoon cayenne pepper
- ¾ cup water
- ¼ cup olive oil
- ¼ cup chopped cilantro
- Salt and pepper to taste

Blend garlic and shallots in food processor for 30 seconds. Scrape down sides of bowl and process again until ingredients are minced. Add avocado pulp, lime juice, vinegar, cumin and cayenne pepper and process for one minute. Scrape down sides of bowl and process again until all ingredients are well blended. Add water and blend for another minute. With food processor running, drizzle in olive oil and continue to run for 30 seconds.

Scrape dressing into mixing bowl. Mix in chopped cilantro. Taste and adjust seasoning with salt and pepper. For best flavor, let dressing sit for 30 minutes before serving.

Pour it over wedges of sturdy lettuce such as Bibb, iceberg or hearts of Romaine. Toss it with slices of cucumber, celery and carrots. Add rinsed canned beans and cooked grains or pasta for a complete meal.

Try Southwest Goddess Dressing for lunch at The Gallery at Snyder/Phillips, Brody Square and Riverwalk Market at Owen on April 10.