

Avocados... The Alligator Pear



Avocados are known as the Alligator Pears, because of their shape & the leather-like appearance of their skin. The word Avocado is derived from the Aztec word "ahuacatl".

They are considered fruits not vegetables, belonging to the berry family!! They are the fruit from *Persea Americana*, a tall evergreen tree that can grow up to 65 feet in height!!

We've all heard the "bad rap" that Avocados is too high in fat. While it is true that they are high-fat fruits, the fat they contain is unusual & provides many proven health benefits!

First, the phytosterols, that form a major portion of avocado fats, are key supporters of our inflammatory system that help keep inflammations under control & are mainly well-documented with problems involving arthritis. Second, the polyhydroxylated fatty alcohols (PFAs), which are widely present in ocean plants but fairly unique among land plants, also provide us with anti-inflammatory benefits. Third, the unusually high amount of oleic acid, help our digestive tract absorb fat-soluble nutrients like carotenoids & lower our risk of heart disease. These constitute half of the total fat in avocados, just like the composition of olive oil & olives.

So, don't be fooled by the avocado's reputation as a high-fat food. Like other high-fat plant foods (e.g. walnuts & flaxseeds), avocado can provide us with unique health benefits.

To add to the above, Avocados provide nearly 20 essential nutrients, including potassium, fiber, Vitamin E, B-Vitamins & folic acid. They also act as a "nutrient booster" by enabling the body to absorb more fat-soluble nutrients, such as alpha & beta-carotene & lutein, in foods that are eaten with the fruit.

I'm sold!! What about you?? Here are 5 more reasons to eat Avocados regularly:

1. Avocados are packed with antioxidants

Avocados are a great source of lutein, a carotenoid that works as an antioxidant & helps protect against eye disease. They also contain the related carotenoids zeaxanthin, alpha-carotene and beta-carotene, as well as tocopherol (vitamin E).

2. Avocados make you feel full

Half an avocado contains 3.4 grams of fiber, including soluble & insoluble, both of which your body needs to keep the digestive system running smoothly. Plus, soluble fiber slows the breakdown of carbohydrates in your body, helping you feel full for longer.

3. Avocados can protect your heart and your unborn baby

An avocado cup provides almost a quarter of your recommended daily intake of folate, a vitamin which cuts the risk of birth defects. If you're pregnant—or planning to be—avocados will help protect your unborn baby. A high folate intake is also associated with a lower risk of heart attacks & heart disease.

4. Avocados help lower cholesterol

As well as increasing feelings of fullness, the oleic acid in avocados can help reduce cholesterol levels. In one study, individuals eating an avocado-rich diet had a significant decrease in total cholesterol levels, including a decrease in LDL cholesterol. Their levels of HDL cholesterol (the healthy type) increased by 11%.

5. Avocados taste yummy!!

The last reason is simple—avocados are a healthy way to boost the flavor and texture of your meals. Toss chopped avocado on a salad or bowl of soup, serve guacamole as an appetizer or condiment.

Now, let's all start adding these healthy fruits to our salads or as dips

One more thing you need to know is Avocados have to be peeled in a special way in order to get all the nutrients! Peeling it right makes all the difference to our health!!

Research has shown that the greatest concentration of carotenoids in avocado occurs in the dark green flesh that lies just beneath the skin. So, to peel an avocado right, you don't want to slice into that dark green portion any more than necessary. For this reason, the best method is what the California Avocado Commission has called the "nick & peel" method. In this method, you actually end up peeling the avocado with your hands in the same way that you would peel a banana. The first step is to cut into the avocado lengthwise, producing two long avocado halves that are still connected by the seed. Next you take hold of both halves & twist them in opposite directions until they naturally separate. At this point, remove the seed & cut each of the halves lengthwise to produce long quartered sections of the avocado. Then grip the edge of the skin on each quarter & peel it off, just as you would do with a banana skin.

The final result is a peeled avocado that contains most of that dark green outermost flesh very rich in carotenoid antioxidants!

I know you can't wait to eat these delicious fruits!! Here's an easy recipe to prepare Guacamole Dip!!

Ingredients:

3 large, ripe avocados, cut in cubes

1 large red onions, finely diced

1 ripe jalapeno (chilly peppers), seeds removed & finely diced

1 crushed garlic clove with sea salt

1/8 teaspoon red chile powder

1 teaspoon freshly-squeezed lemon juice

1 large diced tomato (optional)

Enjoy Guacamole with Baked Chips or Bread!!! Bon Appetit