AVOCADOS

Ingredient of the Month

Presented by ACFEF Chef & Child Foundation and Clemson University
The avocado is renowned for its light-green flesh, buttery texture and nut-like taste. Originally known as the alligator pear because of its shape and rigid, greenish-black skin, these fruits come from a tall, tropical evergreen tree called *Persea americana*. While native to the tropics and subtropics, most avocados found in the U.S. are produced in California. Avocados bloom between February and May, but can be harvested all year because they do not ripen until after they have been picked or fallen off the tree. Different varieties have different peak seasons, which make avocados available year-round. They are a good source for “good” fat, protein, fiber, vitamin C and other nutrients such as thiamine and riboflavin.

From sweet to savory and light to heavy, people all over the world use the avocado for a variety of dishes. The most common being the Mexican dish guacamole and, in fact, most avocados consumed in the U.S. are said to be on Super Bowl Sunday, presumably in guacamole dishes. Brazilians use avocado in ice cream and Filipinos puree it with sugar and milk for a dessert drink. Avocados can be seen sliced on top of a hearty hamburger or chopped in a light salad. One of the great features of an avocado is that it requires very little preparation, meaning it is rarely cooked because its flavor and texture are so delicate.

Healthy ingredient contribution

**FIBER:** Avocados have nearly twice the amount of soluble fiber found in apples. Soluble fiber helps lower total cholesterol and bad cholesterol, therefore, reducing the risk of heart disease and regulates blood sugar for people with diabetes.

**FOLATE:** The folate supplied by avocados promotes healthy cell and tissue development. This is especially important during periods of rapid cell division and growth such as infancy and pregnancy.

**MONounsaturated FATS:** Avocados are a great source of heart-healthy monounsaturated fat. Monounsaturated fat is a “good fat” because it helps lower blood cholesterol.

**POTASSIUM:** Avocados have about the same amount of potassium as bananas. Potassium is a very important mineral to the human body. It has various roles in metabolism and body functions. Potassium is essential for the proper function of all cells, tissues and organs. It is necessary for building muscle and for normal body growth.

**VITAMIN B6:** Avocados are a good source of the water-soluble vitamin B6. Water-soluble vitamins cannot be stored in the body and must be supplied by diet. Vitamin B6 helps the immune system produce antibodies, which are needed to fight many diseases. The body also uses it to help break down proteins, meaning the more protein you eat, the more vitamin B6 you need.

**VITAMIN C:** Avocados are a good source of vitamin C. It is a water-soluble vitamin that is necessary for normal growth and development. Vitamin C is one of many antioxidants that block some of the damage caused by free radicals, which are by-products that result when our bodies transform food into energy. Vitamin C is also required for the growth and repair of tissues in all parts of your body.

**VITAMIN E:** Avocados supply vitamin E, which is an antioxidant that protects your body from free radicals. Vitamin E also plays a role in healthy skin and hair.

**VITAMIN K:** Avocados contain vitamin K, which plays an important role in helping the body with blood clotting.

Varieties and uses

Avocados can be used in many dishes such as salads, dips, appetizers, and soups or eaten alone. The different varieties of avocado include Bacon, Fuerte, Gwen, Hass, Pinkerton, Reed, Sharwil and Zutano. There are many combinations, which makes around 500 varieties, with the Hass avocado being the most common. Most varieties of avocado are oval- or round-shaped with thick, rough skin. Depending on the type, avocados can range from 3 ounces to 4 pounds.

- **Bacon avocado** is a sweeter variety with smooth skin found in midwinter.
- **Fuerte avocado** is a fall to spring variety that is medium sized with neither smooth nor rough skin. As an easy-peeling variety with milk flavor and pale yellow flesh that slices well, this variety is ideal for salads and sauces.
- **Gwen avocado** is similar to the Hass but slightly larger.
- **Hass avocado** is the main, year-round variety. Its skin is much darker and the flesh is silky smooth with a rich and nutty flavor. These are a good choice for dips and spreads.
- **Pinkerton avocado** is a winter variety that peels easily and has smaller seeds.
- **Reed avocado** is a rounder summer variety with less smooth skin.
- **Sharwil avocado** is a medium, small-stoned variety that has a nutty flavor and oil-rich flesh with an easily spreadable texture.
- **Zutano avocado** has a lighter-colored skin and is a summertime variety.
Storage
Refrigerate ripe avocados until ready to use, but only for a few days. Placing an avocado in a paper bag with an apple or banana and storing it at room temperature will accelerate the ripening process.

Serving size
One half of Hass avocado provides: 125 calories, 5 grams of fiber, 3 grams of protein, 11 grams of fat, 15% DV of folate, 10% DV of vitamin C, and 10% DV of potassium.

Contributions for this article were made by Rachel Ellyn and the following recipe was created and tested by Clemson University’s Culinary Nutrition Undergraduate Student Research Group.

AVOCADO SKEWERS WITH COCONUT RED CURRY SAUCE

Yield: 12 servings

Ingredients:
- 2 cups fresh pineapple chunks
- 1 red bell pepper, cut into 1-inch chunks
- 1 sweet onion, cut into 1-inch chunks
- Wooden skewers, soaked for 30 minutes
- One 13.5 ounce can of lite coconut milk
- 2 tablespoons red curry paste
- 1 tablespoon hoisin sauce
- 2 teaspoons fish sauce
- 2 teaspoons fresh lime juice
- 1½ teaspoons cornstarch
- 3 avocados, cut into 1-inch chunks
- 2 cups fresh pineapple chunks
- 1 red bell pepper, cut into 1-inch chunks
- 1 sweet onion, cut into 1-inch chunks
- Wooden skewers, soaked for 30 minutes

Method: Preheat grill pan coated with oil over high heat. In a small mixing bowl, mix coconut milk, curry paste, hoisin sauce, fish sauce and lime juice. Place in a small sauce pan over medium heat. Add cornstarch and stir until slightly thickened. Remove from heat. Thread each avocado, pineapple, bell pepper and onion onto a skewer. Gently coat each skewer in the coconut red curry sauce. Place skewers on grill pan and grill to get a light char mark on each side. Coat skewers with sauce, again, and serve with remaining sauce.

Nutrition Information

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Calories: 140</td>
<td>Sodium: 290mg</td>
<td>Vitamin A: 20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fat: 10g</td>
<td>Fiber: 4g</td>
<td>Vitamin C: 50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sat. Fat: 7g</td>
<td>Sugars: 4g</td>
<td>Calcium: 2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carbs: 23g</td>
<td>Protein: 2g</td>
<td>Iron: 8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This recipe was created and tested by Clemson University’s Culinary Nutrition Undergraduate Student Research Group.