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THE AVOCADO FOR THE TABLE

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Brillat-Savarin once said that the man who invents a new dish is of more use to humankind than he who discovers a new star in the heavens. As wide as is the range of dishes which appear on our bills of fare; yet they are derived from a comparatively limited amount of foodstuffs. Chefs and Epicureans have for years tried to devise new dishes to tickle the palate of those blessed with earthly goods; yet these new dishes resolve themselves into new combinations and mixtures of known foodstuffs and become popular only through new flavors, or savory combinations, or gain an ephemeral success and vogue through the fad of the hour or through the predilection of a celebrity of the stage.

But given a new food product, either of the gardens, fields, or woods, or the streams or oceans, a new material is given the expert cook to test his ingenuity in bringing out the characteristic individuality in its most original form. The remotest places in the Temperate Zone have been ransacked to produce something which may become of use as human food, and the supply is so varied as to present a large assortment wherefrom to pick according to season. Preservation has further extended the amount to choose from during the whole year, and the development of transportation gives today to the average man a variety on his bill of fare which a hundred years ago not even princes could afford.

Today it is the explorer in far-off countries who meets with new dishes, and having acquired a liking, introduces them at home. The world traveler in his peregrinations meets with new creations of the chef's art, and wishes to find them on his home table. Governments in their search for new foods for their increasing populations send out scientists in quest of material likely to prove of value as promising foodstuff.

It is such new products in the hand of an expert chef that enables him to produce those new dishes which make him famous and incidentally bring a welcome addition to the table. Among these new introductions which have been found of value and for which a ready market is found, is the avocado, erroneously named alligator pear, of tropical origin. This fruit has been introduced on the table of the Temperate Zone and has immediately found a welcome acceptance. The demand being stronger than the supply, cultivation of the trees has been started in regions congenial to the best growth of the plant. Today we find extensive plantations of avocados both in Florida and in Southern California, which will come into bearing in years to come, and the fruit of which will become available to the same extent as that of another tropical fruit, the banana.

If in former years, haphazard experiments have sometimes led to the discovery of lucky combinations or preparations of a new food product, today the up-to-date chef turns to the physiologist and nutrition expert to receive exact and reliable information on the composition of said foodstuff, which will give indications of which way the new material

will prove the most popular as a new dish.

The avocado in the country of its origin, where it goes by the more euphonious name of ahuate, is eaten in its raw state, and cannot be very much improved by culinary preparation, except as pleasing variety from the too monotonous serving as a salad.

The composition of the avocado reveals a large amount of fats, readily digested by the average stomach. Besides the big amount of water, it also contains some protein and minerals to a larger extent than the average fruit. The absence of carbohydrates makes it a valuable food for persons afflicted with diabetes.

As stated before, the avocado is largely served in its raw state, and the fruit is indeed adapted to a variety of preparations to which most fruits do not so readily lend themselves. The characteristics of a good avocado are: thin skin, small stone or pit, flesh of the consistency of butter, smooth and free from fiber. Maturity of the avocado can be determined by pressing with the finger on the skin, when the flesh should give way; also when halved, the outer skin or covering of the stone should adhere to the stone when removing same. Shape has nothing to do with flavor or quality, but it is claimed that small, thin-fleshed varieties of Guatemalan avocados have a finer, more delicate nutty flavor than the large, thick-fleshed varieties.

There is not a course with which the avocado cannot be served, either in the raw or the cooked state, from cocktail to ice-cream. If we consider the raw state first, we can serve this fruit chilled on ice, halved, and served with a French dressing. The most primitive way of serving it, is to halve it lengthwise and remove the stone, making incisions in the flesh pretty near to the skin. Sprinkle salt and lemon or lime juice over it and chill it on ice. Again, the flesh can be scooped out, lightly mixed with mayonnaise, and refilled in the shells. It also blends well with other salad ingredients, such as celery, apples, tomatoes, walnuts, pineapple, grapefruits, red pepper, etc. The dressings may vary from plain salt and lemon juice to French dressing, mayonnaise, and thousand island dressing; also it is sometimes served with sugar and cream.

As a Cocktail, the flesh is cut in cubes, mixed with cocktail sauce, and green peppers, chilled, and served in glasses.

As a Sandwich, the flesh is rubbed through a sieve, seasoned, mixed with mayonnaise, spread on lettuce leaves, and pressed between two slices of bread. For more elaborate affairs, procure some small boats made from puff paste. Press the flesh of an avocado through a sieve, together with the yolk of a hard-boiled egg; season with salt, pepper, a little lemon or lime juice; fill the boats with this mixture in dome shape; sprinkle the top with the white of the hard-boiled egg chopped up; and add a dusting of paprika, or put a strip of red sweet pepper on top.

Avocado En Surprise. - Cut an avocado in two, scoop the flesh out, press it through a sieve, season, add a little mayonnaise to bind the whole to a smooth consistency, and refill the shells, leaving the hollow space in center where stone was. Rub part of the flesh with the yolk of a hard-boiled egg through a sieve, season, and color with a few drops of Soya sauce. Shape this mixture into the form of the kernel and replace in the center to imitate stone. Serve on a bed of lettuce leaves.

To Serve as a Special Course or salad for cold meats, line a mold with a good Madeira wine jelly, when same has set on the ice; put in a layer of avocado cut in cubes; fill up with jelly; let set again; add a layer of the meat of tomatoes cut in cubes and previously drained; add another layer of jelly till the mold is full. Place on ice until firm; serve with mayonnaise in a sauce boat.

As a Dessert, the avocado can be served scooped out and dished up in a glass dish, and served with a sauce "Dame Blanche," which consists of whipped cream, sweetened with vanilla sugar and flavored with cherry brandy (kirschwasser).

The prevalence of serving the avocado as a salad fruit has led many people to believe that it cannot be accommodated any other way than the ones previously mentioned; but the composition of this valuable addition to our line of foodstuffs indicates that it can be cooked and accommodated in a variety of ways.

Avocados in Soup.—In Mexico, the avocado is used as an ingredient of soups, to which it is added cut up in small pieces. In gumbo or mulligatawny, the addition of avocado cut in small cubes is a welcome novelty; or shaped into small balls with a small potato scoop it can serve as a garnish to any clear soup. They may also be cooked in chicken broth, rubbed through a sieve with the liquor in which they have been cooked, put back in a pot, brought to a boil, and a little arrowroot added which has been previously mixed with cold water. To this add a little sweet cream before serving. As a cream soup, the nutty flavor of the avocado comes to its best advantage. The absence of starch in the fruit, where the amount present is insignificant, requires that a binder be used. This may be a base of rice cooked in some rich stock and then rubbed through a sieve. To this the meat of the avocado is added and cooked soft; then strained again to procure a smooth cohesion of both, and served with cream slightly flavored with a little grated nutmeg. Another method is to cut some celery in small pieces, smother these in butter, add some flour to form a paste, fill up with veal or chicken stock, add the avocado cut in pieces, and let slowly cook for an hour. Rub through a sieve and bind with a yolk of egg beaten in some sweet cream.

Fish Baked with Avocado is a novelty worth trying. Most fishes when baked in a dry state, without the addition of a generous amount of fat, be it either butter or oil, dry out quickly, being in general deficient in fat. The addition of avocado, rubbed to a paste with either butter or olive oil and seasoned with paprika and salt, then spread on the fish and baked in the oven, is a decided novelty. As a garnish with a planked fish, the combination is also pleasing.

Avocado with Meat or Fowls.—The high price at the present time prevents the more general use of this fruit with meats or fowls; yet sliced and fried in butter, it can be served with broiled meats or chickens.

As a Vegetable, the avocado can be cooked either smothered in butter or boiled in a little chicken stock and served with Poulette sauce or a cream sauce. When yet a little firm the avocado can be cut in slices, macerated with salt, pepper, and a little lemon juice, dipped in batter, and fried in deep grease.

Stuffed Avocado can also be served as a separate course. Remove the flesh of the avocado, cut in small cubes, and fry in butter with a few fresh mushrooms cut fine and

cooked lean ham. Add a spoonful of cream sauce, some white bread crumbs, chopped parsley, salt, pepper, grated nutmeg, and bind with yolk of a raw egg. Refill in the shells, sprinkle liberally with grated Parmesan cheese, and bake slowly in the oven.

As a Dessert, the avocado can be prepared in a variety of ways. Raw, it can be served sliced, macerated with brandy, white wine, and sugar. Cooked, the avocado, cut in quarters, is served after having slowly cooked in syrup to which a few pieces of ginger have been added.

As an Ice Cream, a cooked custard is prepared the same as for Philadelphia ice-cream, the mashed avocado added, flavored with a little almond extract, frozen, and served with Japanese rice cakes.

As a Pudding, the avocado allows of several preparations where the ingenuity of the cook is given ample leeway.

Avocado Prince Cupid.—Blanche some rice in water, strain the water off, fill up with white wine, add some pineapple cut in small pieces and a stick of vanilla. Cook to consistency and cool off. Dish the rice on a platter or silver dish as a socle. Dispose the avocado, cut in halves, on this rice. Fill the cavity with guava jelly, flavored with maraschino. Add a small piece of angelica to the small end of the avocado to imitate the stem. Sprinkle a few chopped macaroons over the whole and serve with guava syrup.

Avocado en Surprise.—Cook some rice in milk, sweetened with sugar and flavored with vanilla. When cooked, incorporate a little butter and cool off. Cut avocados in halves, macerate in vanilla syrup and cognac. When needed, dish up rice on silver platter, making a depression in the center, in which the avocados will be disposed in a ring. Cover the outer part of the border of rice with meringue (white of eggs beaten to a stiff froth and sweetened), powder with sugar, and bake in hot oven. Glace the avocados with orange jelly before serving.

Avocado Queen Liliuokalani.—Peel small avocados, figuring on one to a person. Cut off the tip at the larger end to remove the stone carefully without breaking the pear. Sprinkle a teaspoonful of Creme d'Anisette in the cavity and fill with praline ice. Place the tip over the ice, wrap in wax paper and put back in conservator. Cut a ring for each pear out of sponge biscuit or Genoise, dip in Anisette syrup, and dispose on glass shells. Set the iced avocado on top of the ring, add a piece of angelica to simulate the stem. Decorate the lower part of the pear and the ring with sweetened whipped cream, sprinkle some crushed nougat on it, and serve with a fresh strawberry sauce.