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HOW FAR CAN WE GO WITH THE AVOCADO AS A FOOD ? WILL PEOPLE EAT IT, AND TO WHAT EXTENT?

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This subject has been assigned to me by the program committee. The answer to it is rather speculative and while some of you may not agree with me in all I say, I shall be recompensed by the thought that the avocado growers will hope I am right in my conclusions.

Every reference to the avocado in countries where it grows to any great extent speaks of it as a staple article of food among the natives.

Sailors, particularly of the old "wind jammers" of the "Tramp" type referred to avocados as "mid-shipman's butter." On long voyages when fresh fruits and vegetables were scarce and scurvy was common, the sailors looked forward to the time with much interest when they would get avocados to eat. Scurvy was unknown when avocados were the chief article of food. One writer says when the stay was long and the chief article of food was avocados, the sailors longed for the time when they might move on where they would have another change of diet. How true this statement I do not know.

I asked a man who has lived years in Mexico how generally the avocado was eaten there and he said: "every one eats them there, even the poorest Indian, and they eat them as long as the season lasts." Seek a Mexican settlement with avocados for sale and the eager manner in which they dig up a coin for the AHUACATE will convince you that the above is not overdrawn.

I asked an engineer employed on the canal if avocados were generally eaten in Panama and his reply was, "there are five thousand whites in the City of Panama and if there is one who does not eat them he is a freak. I do not believe he is there."

I asked Mr. Knight if they were generally eaten in Guatemala and he said, "why, man they *live* on them."

Mr. Wilson Popenoe, who writes so entertainingly in the Journal of Heredity, speaks of the Guatemalans living on avocados and tortillas and on this diet doing the hardest of work, making long trips with heavy loads. Some of the natives occasionally add frijoles to the avocados and tortillas. In the tropics everywhere from Cuba to the Philippines we find that wherever grown the avocado is a staple article of food among the inhabitants.

If so generally eaten in countries where they are so plentiful, it is logical to believe they will be eaten here when they are more plentiful and people are more familiar with their good qualities.

The taste for them is exceedingly easy to form. In fact, about the only thing necessary to have people like the avocado is to give them a good one in proper condition and show them how to eat it.

I believe the word "salad" has done more to injure the introduction of the avocado than most anything else. We are not a salad eating race, like the French, for instance. The impression has seemingly gotten well established that avocados are only eaten in salads by the idle rich who have cultivated a taste for the things. The people say they are not of the idle rich, they do not care for salads and they have not cultivated a taste for them, so why should they eat them?

A very small percentage of the people in the United States have ever tasted an avocado. In fact, the great majority of them have never *heard* of an avocado.

The following, with some slight modifications, probably, I have heard at least once or twice a week for the past two years, in fact ever since I have been growing avocado trees. "What are avocados? What do they taste like?" I tell them it is a tropical fruit with a taste all of its own that makes mighty fine eating and suggest that they may have heard of it under the name "Alligator Pear." "Oh, is that it? They are those things that sell so high that they make salad of." The salad idea is so firmly rooted that often a look of distrust and disgust plainly shows that they think you are "stringing" them when you explain that salad is a very small part of their use. These are not all tourists nor tenderfeet from back East either. I have had the above repeated by people who have been in California long enough to be called old settlers.

Then we meet another kind who tell you very emphatically they do not like avocados. They bought one and it tasted like soap if it tasted like anything. It is very evident the avocado that was unfortunate enough to fall into such hands was not in proper condition.

When one tastes and tries three times with good avocados in proper condition and still insists he does not like avocados, I advise he consult a specialist about his taster for there is surely something wrong with it.

I was once on a time served avocado sandwiches, so called. I first got a taste of onion, then I detected lemon juice, then my mouth was afire with pepper, then I got a dose of oil and I had not even tasted the avocado yet. My hostess whom I knew very well, indeed, insisted on my having a second helping, for she knew I must be fond of avocados as I was raising them for a living, etc. I told her I was sure fond of avocado sandwiches but I had not tasted any avocado yet. I do not use pepper, I never did like onions and since I was a small boy and had to take oil, I always had a distaste for it. I told her that her avocado sandwiches reminded me of a class in school when a girl was asked to describe a crab. She said a crab is a red fish that swims backward. The teacher told her that a crab was not a fish, it was not red and it did not swim backward, but otherwise she said her description was probably all right.

I am fond of salads and sandwiches when properly made but just why anyone should add oil to the avocado which is already from 12 to 30 per cent fat, or why they should spoil the delightful taste of an avocado with an onion is more than I can comprehend. I again recommend the specialist. Surely the avocado should not be introduced to the beginner by an onion. Most anything would taste as well under such circumstances.

How should you eat them? Why, most any way so you get the taste of the avocado. Eat them with your other food; eat them with your meat; eat them in your ice cream or eat

them on your pie. It can be served nicely with any course from soup to nuts. I prefer mine spread on my bread about like my mother used to spread jam when I was a small boy. Add a pinch of salt if you please, but make the pinch small.

The Guatemalan porter does not offend his stomach by covering his avocado with condiments of all sorts. He breaks off a small piece of his tortilla and scoops out a bite of fruit, eating them together. I envy him.

Professor Jaffa, of our own State University has made a very exhaustive study of the food value of the avocado, as all of you well know who have had the pleasure of hearing him 'at former meetings. It is high in protein and mineral salts, while its greatest food value is in the large amount of oil. Fats are now scarce and it is doubtful if they will ever be plentiful as they have been in the past. While vegetable oils may not take the place of animal fats entirely, we feel that the avocado comes nearer it than anything else.

So far I have never heard a complaint about the avocado being indigestible but have heard many comments on how easily digested it was. I have found it agreeing with the most delicate stomach. I am positive it is mildly laxative. I should select it as an article of diet in wasting diseases such as tuberculosis. I should consider it of great value in diabetes. While I am not in practice in California and have had no opportunity to test it, I should not hesitate to give it in moderation even in typhoid fever. I look forward to no great distant day when it will be recognized as a great food for invalids, the overworked, the neurasthenic and the dyspeptic. This will be particularly true at the vegetarian sanitoriums. Vegetarians will welcome it as a great addition to their food list.

A few days ago a gentleman came to look over my place and he said, "If I were as enthusiastic as you I would set out a large orchard, but I have seen enough avocado groves in the last week to supply the United States and I feel there will be no market for them at a profit."

I told him he reminded me of Col. Harris of Kentucky who sent his crop of tobacco to New York for sale. The report from the broker as to market conditions gave him some uneasiness and he took it upon himself to go to New York to see about it. His first place to visit was the warehouse. He had never seen so much tobacco in all his life as he saw piled up there. The quantity appalled him as he did not know there was so much tobacco in existence. When he consulted his broker he was told that the market was a little "off" but was coming better and he advised holding for a higher price. His reply was "sell that tobacker and sell at once." He started for his hotel, but as he wanted to see the city he concluded to walk. He met many people and as he did not know one of them he concluded there were a good many strangers in town. His night was rather restless and being an early riser was waiting at the door when the broker appeared for his day's business. His first question was, "Have you sold that tobacker?" The broker said he had not but would attend to it the very first thing. "Hold it, hold it," shouted the Colonel rather excitedly. The broker a little perplexed, inquired the reason for his sudden change of heart. "Well," said the Colonel, "when I went into that warehouse I saw enough tobacker to last these United States ten years, and I said 'sell,' but when I walked up to my hotel I saw enough people to chaw all that tobacker in three days, so I guess I will hold it for higher price."

We have been talking about varieties and methods of culture for the past three years,

ever since this association came into existence. We have planted our groves and some of us have fruit to sell, while others are living on expectations, and these expectations we hope will soon be realized. We have reached the place where we will have to be doing some missionary work or our supply will soon be greater than the demand. We must be getting others to try avocados. Remember that learning to eat avocados is like learning to swim. When you have learned once you never forget it. Everyone who learns to like them makes a customer. Those who have learned to eat them will continue to do so but we must educate others that our market will increase as fast as our production. Just how we must go about it, how much is to be done by the individual grower and how much by this association are problems we must work out.

In direct answer to the first part of my subject, "How far can we go with the avocado as a food," I will say we can go the limit. There is no danger people will eat too many of them. Why will people eat it, and to what extent? Well, why does a cat eat cream? The cat eats cream because she likes it and then it is good for her. We may give the same reason why people will eat avocados. People like avocados, or will like them when they get good ones, and that will be the great reason why they will eat them. People will eat many things because they like them, although the food value may be very small. Then they will eat avocados when they find out their great food value. It's easy digestibility and exceedingly pleasant taste cannot help making it popular when its merits are known. We should make its merits known.

"It takes the place of meat," is a slogan that will make many eat it. For the past several years we have been getting away from a meat diet. The present war has so increased the price of meat that more and more are cutting down their amount of meat. Meat will probably never be as cheap again as in the past and many will not go back to a meat diet. Some will still have the feeling that they need a little meat, but if they find avocados make a good substitute they surely will eat them. Avocados will be eaten when the price comes down to real food value. Of course, I hope to sell fruit at the prevailing fancy prices. It is now impossible for the man with a small income to eat them regularly. When he pays \$1.00 or \$1.50 for an avocado he is not getting food value for his money. He buys because he has the price and wants to gratify that craving for something good. Prices will come down some time, but I think it will be a long time until good avocados will sell per pound for less than the price of butter.

People will buy them to the extent to which we educate them, to the extent of our ability to sell them at a reasonable price and to the extent of their ability to raise that price.