

## THE AVOCADO — IN 1694

The Avocado, called Pera d' Avoca to in Spanish, is a fruit resembling the Boncretien pear, as far as the shape and size are concerned. The meat which melts in the mouth might be compared to that of some kind of peach. The skin which is fairly thin, although strong and supple, has a fine, uniformly green colour, not changing into yellow until the fruit is completely ripe. The meat of this fruit is of a pale green and has hardly any consistency when ripe so that one can eat it with a spoon as if it were jelly or marmalade. The taste at this stage is rather akin to that of a beef-marrow pie. Some people serve it on a plate with sugar and a little rosewater and orange blossoms.

When picked before it is quite ripe, it is cut into slices and eaten with pepper and salt: then it tastes like artichokes with pepper-sauce. No matter how one uses it, it is very good for the stomach, warm and very nourishing. The buds of its branches put in Pianiste tisanes brings relief to people suffering with smallpox. Drinking the extract on an empty stomach in case of injury to this organ by blows or by a fall, is very certain to induce vomiting and ejection of the clotted blood. The use of this fruit stops diarrhea and dysentery but being very heating it also stimulates the sexual appetite.

One finds in the center an almost round and slightly uneven stone without a kernel and no harder than a chestnut when the skin is taken off. One hour after the pit has been separated from the fruit it splits into two or three pieces: if planted in this condition it will not grow because the seed is broken and spoiled. So that when one desires to plant it, it must be put into the soil the minute it is taken out of the fruit. It remains underground eight or ten days before coming up. It produces a rather nice tree although it cannot be compared to the beauty of the apricot tree. The wood is grayish like the bark: the leaves are long, pointed, medium thick and have a rather nice green colour. Their flowers are placed in clusters, of which the petals, resembling stars, have six small leaves of a dirty white or yellowish colour around a center of nine stamens. Six of these stamens lean in different directions and the three others which are quite straight, tightly hug yellow buds, with short stems, which are the origin of the fruit. This flower has a fairly nice odor and rather penetrating. The tree starts to bear fruit twice a year when two and a half years old or three at the latest.

There are a number of these trees in all the Spanish domains, the Spaniards being infinitely more careful than the French or other nationalities in planting trees and preserving them. For it is rare that a Spaniard eats a fruit in forest or plain without putting the pits or seeds into the soil.

There is a section in the island of S. Dominique where one finds a great quantity of those avocado trees of a splendid thickness and height. The Sangliers, some kind of wild hogs, come there from all around when the fruit is ripe and falls on the ground or is shaken off by the wind. These animals then grow very fat while their flesh gets an excellent flavor.

*Description of the Avocado as found on the island of Martinique in 1694 by F. Jean-Baptiste Labat, and recorded by him in Nouveau Voyage Aux Isles de L'Amerique, published in 1722.*

*(Translation of pages 343-346 by Mrs. H. de Groot. 2308 Fargo Street, Los Angeles, California)*