

THE NUTRITIONAL VALUE OF THE AVOCADO

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The avocado has been used as a food in Mexico, Central and South America for centuries. Its use in the United States covers a period of more than fifty years. During this time it has become more abundant, and its use has gradually given it a place on the market. The reason it has not become commonly used by all people is due partially to the fact that its true value as a food has not been fully appreciated, and also it has always been considered a luxury — due to the high cost of this fruit in its early history. The emphasis in advertising has been on the fact that it is a salad fruit and most people thought of the avocado as a luxury item that was very fattening, anyway. This one idea in the mind of the present day housewife has done more to keep the avocado out of the market basket than any other single factor.

Due to the remarkable keeping quality of this wonderful fruit, it can be shipped almost anywhere when it is properly handled. We have kept them for two months, when traveling, and know their latitude from experience. The housewife should be taught to buy the fruit and ripen it herself. It is far superior to fruit bruised by repeated handling in the market. She should be told to ripen it and hold it in the refrigerator until she needs it. It will then always be perfect.

The wide distribution of this fruit along the coastal shelf of California has brought the price down to the level where the average family cannot afford to leave it out of the weekly menu plans. In the first place, the avocado—like milk—is almost a perfect food. It is the only fruit known which contains all the food elements (carbohydrates, protein and fat) as well as a wide spectrum of vitamins and minerals. Its ash value (or caloric value) is very high at 29.4%. Its nearest competitor is the banana, with 25%. It can readily be seen that the mature avocado is an energy food of real importance.

The carbohydrate content averages 4.5%, half that of most other fresh fruits which, being sweet, contain up to 20% sugar. The oil content differs greatly from other fruit and in this very fact lies one of its chief values in its role as a protective food.

To begin with, fats are divided first into two groups: animal or hard fats (known as saturated fats), and vegetable (or unsaturated fats). These distinctions have come into prominence within recent years because of their importance in relation to the U.S.'s number one killer — the heart disease known as atherocoronary-sclerosis.

It has been found that the oil of the avocado is one of the most valuable of the unsaturated fatty acids, being fifth in the list of the most desirable oils known as anti-cholesterol agents. This newly discovered property of unsaturated fats or oils is a most important one. It means that the diet must contain a great percentage of such oils in order that the body will be able to take care of the hard, saturated animal fats. The

unsaturated oils act as a flux, or oxidizer, when eaten in ample quantity at the time the saturated fat is taken into the digestive tract. Investigators have found that when excess hard fats are eaten they settle out on the arterial walls, making scaly patches of notable size. These patches, called atherosclerosis spots, attract the blood causing it to form clots which are the resulting commonly known heart attack known as "coronary heart disease."

The liberal use of unsaturated oils in the diet has been found to retard and prevent these collections (or scales) within the arterial walls, and are, therefore, a protective food of great value.

The present day common practice of using hormones and antibiotics in animal husbandry promotes excess fat production in food animals and fowl. Our meats are excessively marbled with fat. Beside this fat intake, we consume large quantities of hydrogenated fats which are chemically changed so that their molecular structure is completely rearranged and hardened. The present estimate of daily consumption of these fats in our present average diet has assumed the alarming proportion of 19 tablespoons per day.

An equal amount of unsaturated fat is desirable to combat this intake. Since most persons wouldn't eat four to six avocados a day to neutralize the intake of saturated fats, the heavy eater of butter, egg yolks, beef fat (such as found in your steaks, roast beef, short ribs, lard, etc.) should substitute avocado for some of these products and should use Safflower oil, corn oil, avocado oil, or sesame oil for cooking and salad oils.

A safe amount of the saturated fats, if equalized with unsaturated fats, would be two tablespoons daily—instead of the commonly consumed 19 tablespoons.

The rising consumption of degerminated cereals, and highly refined and processed foods, is fast devitalizing our diet as is evidenced by the fact that the advertisers claim added value in artificially colored, flavored, bleached, preserved with chemicals degerminated to save spoilage, doctored with calcium depropionate for long-keeping, tilled with extenders, fresheners, and insured against rancidity by taking the best nutritive element out. It is not surprising we are becoming early victims of the so-called degenerated diseases. The enormous increase in the last 50 years of such diseases as common arthritis, tooth decay, and diabetes substantiates the belief of researchers that nutrition and diet play a very important role in our health — or the lack of it.

The public is slowly awakening to the fact that the modern diet is too highly refined too artificially processed, contains too much fat that is devitalized by Hydrogenation, and doctored with artificial vitamins in an effort to make up for such losses of life-giving principles contained in the "out of the garden product." The problem of packaging, freezing, and marketing perishable foods causes them to lose much of their original value as a food, even though they look fresh. They may be days, weeks or months-old before they are consumed. Also, the depletion and demineralization of our soils is a serious problem with which we must concern ourselves. Our vast-used, deepest soils in our finest alluvial valleys are being gobbled up by the subdivisions on every side, leaving the farmer to seek the less fertile hillsides. The process should be reversed; the fertile plains should be kept as a heritage to feed the ever-growing population.

Now that housewives are awakening, and seeking better food with which to nourish their families, we should seize upon this golden opportunity to show them that their food dollar can be better spent for avocados.

FIRST: Avocados are fresh and contain all the life-giving elements and minerals the body can utilize because it is not synthetic and is in the proportion that nature intended it to be to be properly utilized by the body.

SECOND: There are no serious pests which must be continuously sprayed by vicious and deadly poisons that cannot be removed by washing.

THIRD: The avocado has greater food value per pound. The average caloric value of the edible portion of the commonly used fresh fruits contain from 175 to 400 calories per pound, while the edible portion of the avocado averages about 600— which is less than 150 calories per one-half of the average sized (8 oz.) avocado. This is about 2½ times more calories than any other fruit, and within this is contained the plus value of its vitamins, its minerals, and its protective anticholesterol oils.

FOURTH: and by no means last, is the fact that the avocado can be used advantageously and deliriously in any portion of the menu from a toast spread for breakfast on through cocktails and dessert for dinner. Also, its use in special diets should be brought to the attention of diabetics because of the low carbohydrate content of this fruit, and its caloric value.

The avocado, pound for pound, has more energy than unprocessed meat. It has 75% of the energy found in unprocessed cereals. The digestibility of the avocado most nearly approaches that of whole milk. This absolutely fresh, and easily marketed, fruit has been found by investigators to contain Vitamins A,B,C,D,E, and K by testing biologically with laboratory animals. Its mineral content varies, as does that of any food because of soil and climatic variations, but all samples show highly satisfactory gradings. Its iron content is exceptionally high.

Somehow, the buying public has gained the idea that the avocado should be avoided because of this high caloric value and many women avoid them on this account, alone. The consumer should be educated on this one point: The oil contained in an avocado is as nature made it—unsaturated and unhydrogenated. It is not a fattening agent so much as a protective anticholesterol factor that helps them to balance the really fattening and sometimes potentially harmful fats, such as the saturated fats contained in bacon, butter, whole milk, cream, ham, pork sausage, cheese, hamburger filled with fat, well-marbled steaks, chops, and the hydrogenated fats in margarines and many shortenings. Cake, pancake, bread and cookie mixes have had the real food value completely removed by degermination, bleaching, preserving, and freshening by chemical processes.

In conclusion: The avocado contains this valuable anticholesterol factor in its oil and Mrs. Housewife should not worry about the calories in an avocado, but should be taught that the avocado gives a much-needed dietary supplement. It is a food — a source of protein, minerals, and vitamins.