

## Avocado Place Names

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The significance of the avocado as a crop plant in the economy of California is self evident. Since the turn of the century when the fruit was essentially unknown even locally, there has developed a gradual appreciation for the nutritional and other values of the fruit, both locally and throughout the world. The origin of the avocado in the central mountainous areas of Mexico has been traced through anthropological and archeological evidence (10). It appears from current evidence that possibly the oldest avocado materials associated with recent man were those of the Tehuacan Valley where the more primitive avocado types are found in the midden refuse heaps of the early inhabitants of that region. Progenitors of even these early avocado specimens, namely paleobotanical remains of very early avocado types, have been found scattered over many parts of the North American continent including California. Fossil impressions of *Persea* leaves in the sedimentary rocks of the mother lode hills of California probably date from 50,000 years ago when climatic conditions were much different from those encountered today in the Sacramento foothills (9). While these ancient sites of avocado trees were probably known to local ancient man, this information was lost as the present use of local city, town, and locale names are in no way related to the avocado. During the past two hundred years or more, however, man has developed the usage of place names to assist in his communication. The word "avocado" or its closely related equivalents in the Spanish, *ahuacatl*, *aguacatal*, or *aguacate* is sometimes associated with many rather specific areas or places in Latin America where the avocado has been well known or presently is prominent as a crop produced locally in the given area. Some of the place names of 'aguacate' in current usage in Latin America, however, no longer signify that the fruit is still grown in that particular area, as urbanization and modern developments such as changes in climate and introduction of new crops have displaced the original avocado trees. The disappearance of the "yas" trees, a close relative of avocado, from the town of "Yas" in Costa Rica is a point of illustration (9).

The use of "avocado" (*aguacate* and its derivatives in Spanish) as place name designations in Latin America suggests a former widespread development of the avocado as a crop plant or its utilization as a local endemic crop in the several Latin American countries.

There are many communities and villages in Mexico which are designated by the term "Aguacate" in such states as Hidalgo, Michoacan, Sinaloa, Tamaulipas, and Veracruz. Sometimes two small villages within a hundred miles of each other may have the name "Aguacate." El Aguacate (the avocado) is a more specific directive of small towns in the Mexican states of Tamaulipas and Veracruz.

The name of Arroyo Aguacate in Chiapas and that of Arroyo del Aguacate in Michoacan suggest sources of the fruit along those two rivers. A variation of spelling such as *Ahuacate* in Querétaro and in San Luis Potosí and the plural *Ahuacates* in Jalisco suggest possible long association with the production of the fruit to some extent. The town of Ahuacatal in San Luis Potosí is another designation of avocado locale. Further modification of the term as *ahuacatlan*, "the place of the avocado," in the derived Aztec *ahuacaquahuitl* is used for towns in Guerrero, Nayarit, Puebla, Queretaro, and San Luis Potosí. Thus there are several specific communities and towns in various parts of Mexico which are or have been directly associated with the avocado.

The influence of the word "avocado" as designation and naming of places, streets, and roads, especially in California, indeed indicates the significance of the fruit on the economic values of these communities. The use of avocado as a street or road name is currently listed in many towns and communities, particularly in southern California.

Avocado Street is found in Anaheim, Brea, Corona, Costa Mesa, Fountain Valley, La Verne, Lomita, Oceanside, Riverside, Chino, Irvine, Los Angeles, and Spring Valley. Avocado Avenue is located in Chino, Newport Beach, Paramount, Pasadena, Riverside, Yorba Linda, Corona del Mar, El Cajon, Oxnard, and Escondido. Other street designations are Avocado Road (Carpinteria, Oceanside), Avocado Crest Road (La Habrá Heights), Avocado Hill Road (Rincon), Avocado Lane (Pasadena, Rolling Hills Estates, Moreno, Carlsbad), Avocado Place (Monrovia, Camarillo, San Diego), Avocado Way (Anaheim, San Marcos), Avocado Terrace (Hacienda Heights, Altadena), Avocado Boulevard (El Cajon), Avocado Hill Way (Hacienda Heights), Avocado Mesa Road (Riverside County), Avocado Drive (Vista), Avocado School Road (El Cajón), and Avocado Crest (Escondido).

The map of California also shows the geographical feature of Avocado Lake in Kern County. This is a small lake in Avocado Lake County Park alongside the Kings River about eight miles east of Sanger. The small community of Avocado is close by. The development of Avocado Heights by the Regional Planning Commission of Los Angeles County makes this community a prominent name on local maps (14).

While avocado is the more prominent of names associated with streets and roads, there has been the extension of the practice to include specific avocado varieties as street names in some areas. The La Habrá Heights area of Los Angeles County has a series of road names such as Nabal Lane, Benik Road, Kashlan Road, Chota Road, Dorothea Road, Popenoe Road, Sharpless Drive, Ganter Road, Mayapan Road, Cole Way, Leucadia Road, Panchoy Place, and Fuerte Drive to commemorate some very fine pioneers and landmarks in the early avocado industry which developed in that area.

Even the designation of Calavo, an avocado marketing organization, has been applied as a road name in the El Cajon area.

The single name of Avocado Avenue is listed in the Coconut Grove area near Miami, Florida (4).

In the more distant land of South Africa, the name of Avocadale has been noted as a small town in Natal.

The native home of the avocado is generally considered to be the highlands of southern

Mexico and Central America, where the species is found growing wild or sometimes nearby under cultivation. Many communities have cultivated the crop and consequently have been named for this practice. Several rivers and bays have the name as well as nearby mountains and other landmarks.

The term Aguacate is used for 38 small communities in Guatemala, 4 in Colombia, 45 in Cuba, 1 in British Honduras, 13 in Honduras, and 2 in Costa Rica. The comparable term Avocat in Haiti and Trinidad also designates small centers of populations in these countries. There are Aguacate rivers in Guatemala, British Honduras, and Colombia, and 6 in Cuba, and six others in Honduras. Ocean bays identified by "aguacate" are found in Colombia, three in Cuba, and 1 in British Honduras. Avocado Mountains are located in Cuba, 2 in Honduras, and 3 in Costa Rica. The regions of Aguacatlan (near Huehuetenango), Guatemala, and Aguacatal hi Colombia, Cuba, and Costa Rica, Aguacatillo in Guatemala and Honduras, Aguacatico in Cuba, and Aguacatale in Costa Rica are also listed.

The list is probably not complete but it does indicate some of the numerous uses of the word "avocado" and its derivatives to designate geographical features of some of the subtropical and tropical areas of the world.

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*\* Most of these reference materials are in the Map Library, University of California, Los Angeles.*