

The Use of Avocado in the Restaurants of Puebla, Mexico

Maria Teresa Borys

Hotel and Restaurant Management student, Universidad de las Americas, Puebla, Mexico.

Avocado is a plant that originated in Mexico. It has been used since pre-Hispanic times¹. After the colonization of Mexico by Spaniards, avocado was exported to the Old World and started its conquest of the European palates.

Mexico is today the main producer of this fruit, with most of its production consumed internally². Puebla is one of four states of Mexico with the largest avocado production³.

These facts generated interest in the way avocado is used in Mexico. Since restaurants can be considered to reflect the tastes and customs of a town, the main goal of this study was to obtain a general idea about the use of avocado in the restaurants of the city of Puebla (located about 130 km east of Mexico City), capital of the state of Puebla.

Methods and Materials

The study was done in July 1990. The first step was to divide Puebla into four geographical zones in which most of the restaurants are concentrated. The research included 44 restaurants.

Zone A included Juarez Avenue with 13 elegant, expensive restaurants serving international as well as Mexican food.

Zone B included the downtown of Puebla with 11 mainly popular restaurants serving both international and Mexican food.

Zone C included La Paz and San Manuel with 10 expensive restaurants serving specialized food (crepes, seafood, etc.).

Zone D included Plazas with 10 restaurants located in shopping malls, serving both international and Mexican food.

Two aspects of avocado consumption were evaluated:

1. How many kilograms of avocado does a restaurant consume daily?
2. In how many of the total number of dishes offered in the restaurant is avocado used as a garnish or as a main ingredient?

In each restaurant, four questions were asked:

1. How many dishes, including beverages and specialties of the day, are included in the menu of this restaurant?
2. Do you use avocado in your restaurant? How many kilograms daily?

3. In how many dishes of your menu do you include avocado as a garnish?
4. In how many dishes of your menu do you include avocado as the main ingredient?

The resulting data were processed in the University of the Americas, Puebla, using computer programs Excel 2.2 and Statview.

Findings and Discussion

The daily average consumption of avocado per restaurant was 3.92 kg. There was a standard deviation of 3.54 kg and a coefficient of variation of 0.9 kg.

No significant difference between zones was found. The highest daily average consumption per restaurant was 4.55 kg, in Zone D, and the lowest was 3.34 kg, in Zone A (Table 1). The high values of the standard deviation and of the coefficient of variation show that there is a significant variability in the average daily consumption of avocado between restaurants in the same zone, while there is no significant variation in the average daily consumption between zones. This finding is confirmed by the percentages of average daily consumption, ranging from 27.25% in Zone C to 21.16% in Zone B (Table 2).

TABLE 1

	Average Daily consumption		
	Mean (kg)	Standard Deviation	Coefficient of Deviation
Zone A	3.34	2.918	87.211
Zone B	4.27	4.367	102.2
Zone C	3.65	3.154	86.409
Zone D	4.55	4.031	174.801
All Zones	3.92	3.540	90.305

TABLE 2

	Percentage of Average Daily Consumption
Zone A	26.38%
Zone B	21.16%
Zone C	27.25%
Zone D	25.22%

The second aspect evaluated was the number of dishes in which avocado was used. This revealed that avocado is used mainly as a garnish. It was so used (averaging six dishes per restaurant) in 11.62% of all dishes offered in the four zones combined. Only 16 of the 44 restaurants studied use avocado as the main ingredient: an average total of 0.818 dishes—less than one dish per restaurant—amounting to only 1.59% of the total number of dishes offered (Tables 3, 4).

No relation was found between the number of dishes with avocado as garnish or with avocado as the main ingredient and the average daily consumption per restaurant.

Although the average daily consumption of avocado differs from restaurant to restaurant (0 kg to 15 kg), its use in all is very similar. In most of the establishments, there are dishes with avocado as a garnish, usually in the form of guacamole (sauce made with avocado, chili, onions, and cilantro). Only one restaurant serves five different dishes with avocado as the main ingredient, including avocado mousse and cream of avocado. In other restaurants, avocado as the main ingredient is used only in the stuffed form.

TABLE 3

	Mean Number of Dishes	
	As Main Ingredient	As Garnish
Zone A	0.846	9.000
Zone B	1.000	4.800
Zone C	0.400	4.400
Zone D	1.000	5.000
All Zones	0.818	6.000

TABLE 4

	Percentage of Dishes with Avocado		
	As Garnish	As Main Ingredient	Without Avocado
Zone A	16.50%	1.55%	81.95%
Zone B	11.18%	2.32%	86.50%
Zone C	10.33%	0.94%	88.73%
Zone D	7.55%	1.51%	90.94%
All Zones	11.62%	1.59%	86.79%

Conclusions

Avocado dishes are considered elegant and luxurious and could be a good source of profits for the restaurants (the price of avocado on the Mexican market is around one dollar per kilogram) if the chefs and restaurant owners knew more about this fruit. Avocado producers would also benefit from a higher demand by restaurants for their product because they would have a more constant consumer. A well directed publicity program is the only way to inform about this opportunity. It should include the fact that purchasing avocado directly from the producer means the product would be fresher, cheaper, and of better quality; and, with the appropriate handling and pre-preparation procedures, all the qualities of avocado are preserved. The nutritive value of avocado could also play an important role in this publicity, because of the current trends toward "healthy foods." Before beginning a publicity campaign directed to the restaurants, it is important to study the consumers' needs; *e.g.*, if the Mexican consumer would like to eat avocado in a different form than the usual one. Perhaps the results of such study will suggest a wider information program directed to restaurants as well as to consumers.

Literature Cited

1. Storey, W. B., *et al.* 1986. The origin, indigenous range, and dissemination of the avocado. California Avocado Society Yearbook; 1986: pp. 127-133.
2. Affleck, Mark. 1986. The international avocado industry, a global perspective. California Avocado Society Yearbook; 1986: pp. 51-55.
3. Sanchez Colin, S. 1985. Produccion nacional de aguacate. Tres años de actividades del CICTAMEX. Memoria 1982-1985. Mexico.