*Updated: June 2018 - DS*

**Avocado Presentation**

1. **What is an Avocado**
2. Avocados are the fatty **fruit** from Persea americana, a tall evergreen tree that can grow up to 65 feet in height that is native to Mexico and Central America.
3. There are close to 500 varieties of avocados.
4. Avocados are pear-shaped to round and come in many shades of green to almost black when fully ripe.
5. Most common type of avocado is the Hass – Round with black skin.
6. Other common types of avocados are Bacon, Fuerte, Gwen, Lamb Hass, Pinkerton, Reed, and Zutano.
7. Each Avocado is perfected at different times in the season, and has a variation of sizes, colors and flavors.
8. **History of Avocado**
9. The avocado originated in south-central Mexico, sometime between 7,000 and 5,000 B.C. But it was several generations before this wild variety was cultivated.
   1. Archaeologists in Peru have found domesticated avocado seeds buried with Incan mummies dating back to 750 B.C.
   2. There is evidence that avocados were cultivated in Mexico as early as 500 B.C.
10. Spanish conquistadores loved eating avocados but couldn’t pronounce the name.
    1. Eventually the Spanish started calling it aguacate, which ultimately transformed into the work avocado in English.
    2. The first English-language mention of avocado was by Sir Henry Sloane in 1696.
11. Fast forward to 1871, when Judge R.B. Ord of Santa Barbara successfully introduced avocados to the U.S. with trees from Mexico.
12. By the early 1900s, growers were seeing the avocado's commercial potential and ever since growers, enthusiasts and researchers have been hunting for improved varieties.
13. By the 1950s around 25 different varieties of avocados were being commercially packed and shipped in California, with 'Fuerte' accounting for more than two-thirds of the production.
14. Even though 'Hass' was discovered in the early 1930s and patented by Rudolph Hass in 1935, it was not until large-scale industry expansion occurred in the late 1970s that 'Hass' replaced 'Fuerte' as the leading California variety.
15. **Nutrition and Health benefits of Avocado**
16. Avocado has sometimes received a "bad rap" as a fruit too high in fat, but have a unique nutritional profile.
17. While it is true that avocado is a high-fat food (about 85% of its calories come from fat), the fat contained in avocado is called monounsaturated fat.
18. The most abundant fatty acid in an avocado is Oleic Acid which is also found in Olive Oil and is linked to reducing inflammation, heart disease, and diabetes by helping to lower cholesterol and improve blood sugar control.
19. Anti-Inflammatory: Avocados have many anti-inflammatory agents like phytosterols, carotenoid antioxidants, and omega -3 fatty acids.
20. Anti-Cancer: The anti-cancer properties of avocado are definitely related to its unusual mix of anti-inflammatory and antioxidant nutrients.
21. That relationship would be expected because cancer risk factors almost always include inflammation and “free radical” damage
22. But here is where the avocado story gets especially interesting. In healthy cells, avocado works to reduce inflammation and free radical damage.
23. But in cancer cells, substances in avocado allow the free radicals to do their damage and thus kill those cells.
24. Avocados are low in carbohydrates and have very little sugar compared to other fruits. Because of this they are slow to raise blood sugar levels which can help with feeling full and aid in weight loss.
25. This is a fiber-rich food! A half of an avocado has 4.5 grams of fiber which is considered high. Fiber helps to regulate appetite, feeds the good
26. Skin health: Vitamins E, C, riboflavin and niacin are found in avocados. These are all important in maintaining healthy skin!
27. **Picking/Storing an Avocado**
28. The best way to tell if an Avocado is ready for immediate use is to gently squeeze the fruit in the palm of your hand. Ripe, ready-to-eat fruit will be firm yet will yield to gentle pressure.
    1. Color alone may not tell the whole story. The Hass avocado will turn dark green or black as it ripens, but other varieties retain their light-green skin even when ripe.
    2. Avoid fruit with dark blemishes on the skin or over-soft fruit.
29. To ripen a California Avocado, place the fruit in a plain brown paper bag and store at room temperature 65-75° until ready to eat (usually two to five days).
    1. Including an apple or banana in the bag accelerates the process because these fruits give off ethylene gas, a ripening reagent.
    2. Soft, ripe fruit can be refrigerated until it is eaten, but not for more than two or three days.
    3. The California Avocado Commission does not recommend using a microwave to accelerate the ripening process.
30. If you plan to serve the fruit in a few days, stock up on hard, unripen fruit.
    1. Ripe fruit can be stored in the refrigerator uncut for two to three days.
    2. To store cut fruit, sprinkle it with lemon or lime juice or white vinegar and place in an air-tight container in your refrigerator.
    3. If refrigerated guacamole turns brown during storage, discard the top layer.
31. Avocados will brown once cut because of a chemical reaction between the fruit and oxygen. It usually takes about 6 hours to start. There are ways to slow the reaction, but once exposed, it will turn brown eventually. (see attachment for ways to slow it down)
32. The method you use to peel an avocado can make a difference to your health.
    1. Research has shown that the greatest concentration of carotenoids, a type of antioxidant, in avocado occurs in the dark green flesh that lies just beneath the skin.
33. **Fun Facts**
34. Avocados are also known as ***Alligator Pears*** because of the leather like appearance of their green skins.
35. They can vary in weight from 8 ounces to 3 pounds depending upon the variety.
36. Today, the most popular variety is the Hass. The mother tree of all Hass Avocados was born in a backyard in La Habra Heights, California.
37. Some interesting ways of enjoying an avocado include adding it to your ice cream like Brazilians do or pureeing avocados with sugar and milk for a dessert drink like Filipinos might have.
38. San Diego County is the Avocado Capital of the U.S., producing 60 percent of all the avocados grown in California.
39. Health-conscious bakers can substitute avocado for many traditional baking ingredients, including butter and shortening, by simply replacing these ingredients with an equal amount of avocado.
40. **Activities and Demonstrations**
41. How to peel an avocado

**The Pit Method**  
Most food specialists will claim that leaving the pit in an avocado will keep it from turning brown, or placing the pit in a bowl of guacamole will keep the dip from turning brown. This is only partially true. Yes, if the pit was not detached from one half of the cut avocado, the flesh that stays in contact with the pit will not turn brown. That is because it hasn't come into contact with oxygen. Just think, when you make guacamole and place a pit in the bowl, you also tend to cover the dip with plastic wrap, right? It's really the plastic wrap that keeps the guacamole from turning brown, not the pit!

**The Citrus Method**  
Acid does help keep an avocado from browning, but really it only slows down the process. If you're only eating half an avocado, say for breakfast or lunch, keep the pit attached to the second half and rub the cut side with a little lemon or lime juice. Place it in a resealable plastic bag, removing as much air as possible, and refrigerate. It should be fine for up to 2 days, but you might need to scrape off some discoloration. For diced or sliced avocado, [try tossing with 1/2 teaspoon lemon juice per 1 avocado](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G-1kj4t7DLA#t=5m10s). Cover it with plastic wrap so it touches the surface of the avocado and store in the fridge.

**The Water Method**  
Would you believe that cold water helps keep an avocado from turning brown? Chefs and cooks use this method because they need to prepare avocados in advance of restaurant service. Whether you dice, slice or just spoon out your avocado halves, you'll want to immediately **immerse** them in ice cold water (they'll stay fresh for up to 4 hours). The cold water keeps the avocado away from oxygen. Also, rinsing the avocado under cold water helps delay browning. This method works because it keeps out all oxygen.

So whichever method you use, it's all about keeping the avocado away from oxygen. Plastic wrap was never so handy!

