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lookout

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holy guacamole!

Amp up a traditional avocado dip with perfectly picked fruit, tips approved by chefs and unspect-ed extras — yep, even lobster 20



Get It Out

If you start with a nice, ripe avocado (see sidebar), prepping your green fruit for guac-making should be relatively simple.

STEP ONE

Slice the avocado in half lengthwise.

STEP TWO

Remove the pit using a spoon.

STEP THREE

With a butter knife, make long slices in, but not through the skin.

STEP FOUR

Use a serrated spoon to scoop out the flesh.

Green is good: At Ross Quarter, chefs prepare guacamole roadside in a mortar, a stone vessel that makes blending easier every

guac therapy

Build a better bowl of mole by using perfectly ripe fruit, tried-and-true avocado-excavating techniques, and exotic add-ins such as wasabi, seafood and mangoes

Lumpy, chunky and Grinch green, guacamole won't win any beauty contests. But the traditional Mexican dip has been creamy and creamy, and it's hard to beat at a Cinco de Mayo party. Fill a bowl of guacamole on a table of dips, and it'll disappear," says Nathan Myers, author of "Guac" (031, Chronicle). Avocados have a long, fabled history. Clarified as aphrodisiacs by ancient Aztecs, they were also lauded by European sailors on trips back from the

America. The latter dubbed them "mashpotatoes better" due to their consistency and softness to peel. Guacamole itself has been around at least Aztec times. Its name translates as "a sauce made with avocados." The basic of guac was simple, Myers says. "The important thing is ripe avocados, lime and salt. The rest is up to you."

After you've removed the lumpy flesh from the dinosaur-like skin, the green waddlers can be mashed, pureed or sliced with countless ingredients: tomatoes, chiles, cilantro, tomatoes, "There are as many guacamole recipes as there are people in Mexico," Myers says. Part of any tasty guac is balancing the sweetness (usually) fattiness of avocados. "You need something acidic," says Joe Raffa, chef at Oyamel (401 Seventh St. NW, 202-628-1000). That usually means lemon or lime juice. That suggests of citrus also keeps the fruit's flesh from turning icky brown.

Turn up the heat in guacamole via jalapeño or serrano peppers; the creaminess of the guac absorbs some of the chile's fire and curbs their flavor. Creamed chipotle peppers in adobo sauce can also be drained and added into the stuff. Wasabi powder, used to power the Asian-style guac at 861 444 Seventh St. NW, 202-523-7007, transports guac from Southwest to Far East. "Habaneros increase the spice, too," says chef James Meier of Ross Mediterranean (575 Seventh St. NW, 202-783-5523). "I also toast dried chipotles and grind them up for a smoky flavor." Other add-ins can be more exotic. At Café Almatío (405 Eighth St. NW,



Choose Your 'Cado

When you head to the produce aisle, you'll likely find only Hass avocados, which Jan DeLysler of the California Avocado Commission says are favored by consumers for their stamina in shipping and good, buttery flavor. But the linchpin of a delicious guac is a ripe avocado, so you'll want to shop a couple days in advance to allow for ripening, since many supermarket avocados are sold less than masher-ready. To check for ripeness, "cradle it in the palm of the hand," DeLysler says. "If it yields to gentle pressure, it will be ready in one or two days." But no squeezing: That can bruise the fruit. An avocado that's already ripe can be stored in the fridge for up to two days to prevent spoilage.

TIP
To hasten ripening, store fruit in a paper bag with a banana, apple or pear. The ethylene gas they release can speed up softening.

202-263-0822), chef Terry Cutrino uses crumbled cotija, a Mexican cow's milk cheese. Ross Mexican sometimes lanks a fruity guac using peaches or grapes. Myers suggests in his book adding dried cranberries (hmm) or cooled, smoked lobster (yum). "Improvise with whatever's local, fresh

and in season," he says. Currently a resident of Indonesia, Myers makes lots of mango guac. Prepare guac as close to serving time as possible to preserve its taste and keep it from going brown. That means getting dippers ready, too. Corn tortilla chips are stashed, hot, Raffa says,

"In Mexico, tortillas are the traditional way to eat guacamole." Veggie crudités (carrots, celery, jicama) also work nicely, as do chips or even fried wonton wrappers, which come with Serrano dip. Guacamole remains a dish that'll always be, um, ripe for experimentation. Myers likes mashing

over guac recipes to reading the Kama Sutra for your love life. "Check out all the positions. But when you get down to business, stop referring to the manual and do what comes naturally." And don't be surprised if guests never get beyond the appetizer of your menu. For more on avocados,

Lobster Guacamole

Seafood and avocados have long been amigos. The rich fruit provides a nice contrast with the clean, slightly salty flavors of shellfish such as crab and shrimp. Here, it's paired with lobster in a recession-be-fused dip.

- INGREDIENTS**
- 2 large avocados, sliced (2 cups)
 - Juice from 2 limes (1/4 cup)
 - 1 1/2 cups finely chopped cilantro
 - 1 1/2 cups finely chopped red onion
 - 1 1/2 cups seeded and minced Anaheim chile
 - Salt
 - Pepper
 - 4 oz. steamed lobster meat
 - 4 Japanese pickled ginger garnish
 - Serrano seed-water crackers

SERVINGS: 3 CUPS

IN A MEDIUM BOWL, combine the avocados, lime juice, cilantro, red onion and chile with a large spoon. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Gently fold in the lobster meat. Spoon into chilled martini glasses and garnish each glass with some of the pickled ginger. Serve with water crackers.

FROM "WASH OFF" BY NATHAN MEYERS



Green Cuisine

Fancy ingredients and high-tech tools aren't required for standout guacamole, but these products can help you create a more flavorful mash-up.



Spicy and smoky, chipotles in adobo bring fire to a bowl of green. Dices two or three of the bottles, chop and mash in, 3/4 White Foods)



Cinco de Mayo bash guests don't, um, since minutes? Frontera's guac mix adds roasted garlic, chiles and cilantro to your guac. 1/4 White Foods)

Pop the flesh out of an avocado easily with Vasconia's squeezy tool. A handy grapefruit spoon will also do the trick.