

A New Look At Avocados

by Elizabeth Pivonka, Ph.D.,
President, Produce for Better
Health Foundation

(NAPSA)—The rich, delicious flavor and smooth texture of California avocados are why most people add them to their shopping list. But there is a bonus. Apart



Dr. Pivonka

from their wonderful flavor they are packed with nutrients that promote good health.

The smooth and creamy texture that makes California avocados a tasty addition to sandwiches and salads

comes from monounsaturated fat. It is important to know that not all fat is created equal, and some types of fat are actually health promoting. The majority of fat found in avocados is heart healthy monounsaturated fat. It helps lower LDL (bad) cholesterol and boost HDL (good) cholesterol. California avocados also contain another cholesterol fighter known as beta-sitosterol. It helps lower cholesterol by competing with it for absorption.

Avocados contain a host of antioxidants. From vitamin E to a variety of phytonutrients, these powerful antioxidants mop up the byproducts of normal oxidation that can damage cells and cause disease. Besides the studies indicating that a variety of healthful foods may be more effective in preventing disease than supplements, I much prefer a great tossed salad with California avocado cubes to a pill.

Lutein, a phytonutrient linked to eye health is found in avocados. A recent study also linked lutein to prostate health. Not only does this study link lutein-containing foods to prostate health, it shows an even greater potential health benefit when they are combined with lycopene-containing foods such as watermelon and tomatoes. Try the featured recipe for Tortilla Soup. It combines California avocados and tomatoes for big taste and "big" nutrition.

California avocados contain an impressive array of traditional nutrients. Ounce per ounce, avocados contain more folate, vitamin E, potassium and magnesium than any of the other commonly consumed fruits. One ounce is about a fifth of a California avo-



cado, and has just 55 calories.

Remember to keep these nutritional powerhouses at room temperature until they reach their full flavor and ripeness. A ripe California avocado yields to gentle pressure when held in the palm of your hand. Once they are ripe they can be stored in the refrigerator.

California Avocado Tortilla Soup

Makes 8 servings

Preparation Time: 25 minutes

- 3 cans (14 oz. each) fat-free, less salt (or lower sodium) chicken broth**
- 2 cans (10.75 oz. each) low-sodium, condensed tomato soup**
- ½ bunch cilantro, leaves only**
- 3 cloves garlic, finely chopped**
- ½ teaspoon ground black pepper**
- 1 ripe California Avocado, seeded, peeled and cubed (reserve 8 cubes for garnish)**
- 8 corn tortilla chips, crumbled**

In a large pan combine chicken broth, soup, cilantro, garlic and pepper. Bring to a boil, decrease heat, and simmer for 10 minutes. Cool slightly, and puree in batches in a blender.

Return to pan, add avocado cubes and heat through. Ladle into soup bowls and garnish with reserved avocado cubes and crumbled tortilla chips. Serve.

Nutrients per serving: Calories 142; Protein 3g; Fat 6g; Calories from Fat 37%; Carbohydrate 20g; Cholesterol 0mg; Fiber 2g; Sodium 383mg

For more recipes and information on California Avocados go to:
www.avocado.org
www.5aday.com
www.aboutproduce.com

Note to Editors: Forty-third in a series of monthly 5-A-Day columns. For previous stories featuring other fruits and vegetables go to www.napsnet.com and search: "Pivonka."