

FOOD AND CULTURE

One day, when I was walking in a market in Mexico City, I found a fruit display that left me totally perplexed due to the quantity of colors, textures and smells that emanated from it. It looked like a painting by Diego Rivera or Frida Kahlo. I perceived it like an esthetic gift for my eyes, with such a beauty that it had no price. They were everyday fruits that are sold, bought, eaten and enjoyed. At that moment I was not able to stop myself from taking many pictures and buying a large variety of them to devour with my family.

Mexico is a country that grows fruits in all climates, including the desert where prickly pears (tunas) and xoconostles (parts of the cactus) are found. People say that the fruits grown and harvested in Mexico, since ancient times, are the basis of fruits on a global level, even though many fruits are eaten only in Mexico because they are regional or less well-known.

Fruit has always been appreciated in Mexico, and during the pre-Colombian era before the arrival of the Spanish, it was used as a means of exchange for gold and jewels in the banquets of the emperors. The banquets of the Emperor Moctezuma were known to have many dishes, among them delicious fruits.

The main fruits of Mexico in the pre-Colombian time were the prickly pear (tuna), mamey, quanabana, chia, pine nuts, jicama, zapotes and the wonderful avocado, among others.

Of all the fruits that Mesoamerica has given to the world, I believe that the avocado is the one that has most impacted the United States, which imports some 500,000 tons of avocado a year from Mexico.

Avocado is one of those foods that has found its way into the American culture with an unimaginable acceptance. Guacamole is found in restaurant and supermarket menus and is prepared by people in their homes. Guacamole is a sauce prepared with avocado, aguacate or palta.

Avocado also had an erotic significance for the Aztecs, and because of this, women did not have permission to harvest the fruit because it symbolized testicles. According to the pre Columbian mythology, it is said that the Tolteca god, Quetzalcoatl, gave the guacamole recipe to his people, who then spread it to all of Mesoamerica. The recipe was based on mashed avocado and water, and later, other ingredients were added, such as tomato and chile. More ingredients were added, such as onion, garlic and cilantro, that were brought from Spain and other parts of the world during the colonization at the end of the 15th Century and beginnings of the 16th Century.

Avocado has its origins in Mesoamerica, and archeological evidences from 7000 to 8000 B.C.E. have been found in the region of Tehuacan, Puebla and in Mitla, Oaxaca. The main botanical species is named Persea, which has more than 150 species. The American Persea includes the Mexican, Guatemalan and Antillana species. Of these three types come all of the varieties that are known in the world.

Mexico uses guacamole as a sauce to accompany all types of foods, meats, tacos, tortas, quesadillas and much more. In the United States, it is used as an appetizer with chips or accompanying dishes that are prepared with corn or wheat, among other things.

Avocado is very beneficial for heart health. It also has antioxidants and is considered a natural multivitamin, with 20 essential nutrients. It is called the perfect food.

I like guacamole when it has pieces of avocado in it so that you can feel all the textures. This is how I prepare it:

Ingredients:

- 4 avocados cut in cubes
- 2 tomatoes without the seeds, finely chopped
- ½ white onion finely chopped
- ¼ bunch of cilantro finely chopped
- Juice of one lime

1 jalapeño chile finely chopped (you can take out the seeds so that it is not so spicy)

Salt to taste

3 tbsp. of olive oil

Mix all the ingredient, and check the seasoning. The lime helps avocados not to darken. You can also leave the seed of the avocado in the guacamole, which also prevents the sauce from darkening. 🇲🇽

Holly Guacamole!

