

# Avocados

## Secretly Sabotaging Your Weight-loss Goals or the Missing Ingredient in Your Health Plan? YOU be the Judge!

by Cassie I. Story, RDN

Once feared because of their high fat content – and now praised for the exact same claim – avocados have been enjoying their place in the spotlight for the past four decades. I try to view food as much more than “good” or “bad,” and instead focus on if I enjoy it, how it makes my body feel and what effects it has on my particular health goals (at that moment). I encourage you to do the same! After all, YOU know yourself best. That being said, let’s dig into (or peel back) the avocado’s tough exterior and see what lies inside.

### Fat, Carbohydrates, Protein – Oh My!

What do these words even mean? We place so much emphasis on which particular macronutrient is being revered as the savior during any given moment in time – so much so that we sometimes throw these terms around as casually as we discuss Sunday night football.

Macronutrients (fat, carbohydrates and protein) are necessary for human consumption in certain ratios, but to find what works best for you and your health goals , you should meet with a qualified healthcare practitioner (such as a Registered Dietitian Nutritionist with specialized



training in weight management) to establish individualized daily macronutrient distribution goals. When discussing the avocado, I’m going to highlight one particular macronutrient – dietary fat.

Avocados contain a large amount of the dietary fat called oleic acid, which is an omega-9, monounsaturated fat. A meta-analysis of randomized clinical trials that assessed the impact of avocados on cholesterol levels found that when substituted for saturated fat, avocado consumption significantly reduced total cholesterol, low density lipoprotein cholesterol (LDL-C) and triglycerides. However, the optimal amount of weekly avocado intake to have the greatest impact on cardiovascular health is yet to be determined.

As with all whole foods, avocados aren’t just a one trick pony! They also contain a wide variety of nutritionally dense vitamins, minerals and antioxidants – including lutein, which is necessary for healthy vision and skin integrity. Additionally, each avocado provides about 10 grams of fiber – and we can’t forget about the potassium, folate, vitamin A, vitamin E and magnesium they provide as well!

### Calories

If you’re a fan of counting calories or practicing “calorie awareness,” you already know that avocados can add a lot of “extra calories” to food items such as enchiladas, for example. Or, if they are mashed with garlic, tomato, cilantro and jalapeno (aka their most famously used dish –

## Avocado Egg Salad

### Ingredients:

- 1 small ripe, fresh avocado – peeled, pitted, diced
- 5 hardboiled eggs, peeled and chopped
- 1 tbsp. Dijon mustard
- $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp. salt
- $\frac{1}{4}$  cup minced green onions (optional)
- 2 tbsp. chopped chives (optional)

### Directions:

- In a medium bowl, combine half of the avocado, mustard, and salt, and then mash until smooth.
- Add remaining avocado, eggs, and onion. Gently mix together
- Place plastic wrap tightly over top, and press down to remove air pockets. Store in refrigerator for up to 3 days.

## White Bean Chili



### Ingredients:

- 2 tbsp. olive oil
- $\frac{1}{2}$  medium onion, diced
- 2 rib celery, finely diced
- 1 jalapeno pepper, seeded, finely diced
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 tsp. ground cumin
- $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp. ground coriander
- $\frac{1}{4}$  tsp. salt
- 2 (15 oz.) cans cannellini beans, drained and rinsed
- 3 cups chicken broth
- $\frac{1}{4}$  tsp. dried oregano
- 2 cups shredded cooked chicken (rotisserie, or leftover)
- 1 ripe avocado, peeled, pitted, diced
- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup chopped fresh cilantro (for garnish)

### Directions:

- Over medium heat, heat oil in a large pot or Dutch oven.
- Add onion, celery, and jalapeno. Cook, stirring occasionally, until onion is translucent – about 5 minutes.
- Stir in garlic, cumin, coriander, and salt. Cook for an additional minute.
- Stir in one can of beans, and then mash with fork (or potato masher) until beans are almost completely mashed.
- Stir in broth, oregano, chicken, and remaining can of beans. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat to a simmer, and then cover for 25 minutes.
- Remove from heat and stir in avocado. Top with fresh cilantro.

guacamole), and staring at you while placed next to a bowl of tortilla chips , calories from avocados can add up quickly.

While this may seem daunting, you can include avocados in your diet while being calorie-conscious. Half of a medium-sized avocado provides about 150 calories. A 350 calorie lunch can be yours with a ton of fresh vegetables, 3 oz. grilled chicken and a small drizzle of olive oil and lemon. For another simple meal, try cutting an avocado in half, removing the seed, adding some canned tuna (drained) and sprinkling with salt, pepper and a drizzle of lemon juice.

## When Are Avocados Ready?

When it comes to avocados, you have to look beyond the color. Some varieties remain a light green color even when ripe, while others change from light green to dark green or black as they ripen. An avocado is ripe when it is soft at the top and has a slight give in the middle. If the middle feels as soft as the top, it's past its prime. No need to toss it! Slice it, freeze it (without skin/seed) and add 1-2 slices of it to smoothies or protein shakes.

## How to Store Avocados

Leave the avocado on the counter at room temperature until it is ripe. Once ripe, place it in the refrigerator and eat it within two days. If you only need half of the avocado, slice it and leave the seed in the half that you are going to store. You have a few options for how you want to save your other half:

- Squeeze lemon juice over the top, then tightly cover with plastic wrap and place in the refrigerator for up to two days.
- Drizzle with olive oil, then remove the seed and place the cut side down on a plate. Refrigerate and use within 24 hours.



## Conclusion

Nutrient (and calorically) dense avocados can be incorporated into many healthy eating plans. Their creamy texture provides a nice substitution for many other condiments that are high in fat but lack nutritional density. As with all foods, enjoy avocados in moderation!

### About the Author:

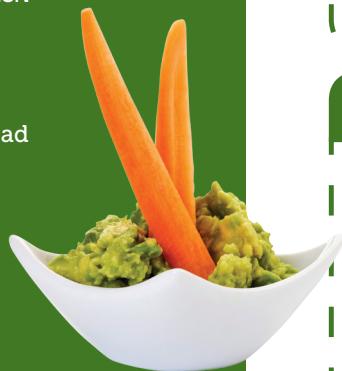
Cassie I. Story, RDN, is a dietitian who has been working with surgical and non-surgical weight-loss patients for the past 12 years. She is the Clinical Science Liaison for Bariatric Advantage where she helps educate other healthcare professionals around the unique nutrition needs of weight-loss surgery patients. She has her own food blog, [www.WLSDailyPlate.com](http://www.WLSDailyPlate.com), which provides recipe inspiration for all members of the family – including those who have had metabolic/bariatric surgery. She enjoys traveling, hiking and spending time outdoors with her two daughters in Arizona.

# AVOCADO TIPS AND RECIPES!

## EASY AVOCADO SUBSTITUTIONS:

For healthy food substitutions using avocado, consider the following:

- Serve fresh guacamole with fresh raw vegetables instead of ranch or onion dip
- Add sliced avocado to salads and soups instead of cheese
- Enhance your protein shake by blending in  $\frac{1}{4}$  avocado
- Mash avocado to add to wraps instead of mayonnaise
- Add sliced avocado to egg, tuna or chicken salad
- Add sliced avocado and tomato to scrambled eggs



## LIFE HACK:

If you've ever been caught needing to use an under-ripe avocado, have no fear! I have a new remedy for you. Simply place the avocado (wrapped in tin foil and placed on a baking sheet) in a 200 degree oven for 10 minutes. Then, remove the avocado and let it cool at room temperature or place it in the refrigerator. Yep! You're welcome.

### Double Dark Chocolate Avocado Protein Shake

#### Ingredients:

- 1 serving chocolate protein powder of choice
- $\frac{1}{2}$  ripe avocado
- $\frac{1}{4}$  frozen banana
- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup liquid (almond, soy, coconut or dairy milk)
- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup spinach
- 1 tbsp. unsweetened cocoa powder
- $\frac{1}{4}$  tsp. ground cinnamon
- $\frac{1}{4}$  tsp. vanilla extract
- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup ice



**Directions:** Add all ingredients into high power blender, blend until smooth.

### Turkey Avocado Burgers

#### Ingredients:

- $\frac{1}{2}$  pound ground turkey
- 1 small ripe avocado, cut into chunks
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- $\frac{1}{4}$  cup panko bread crumbs or almond meal
- 1 jalapeno pepper, deseeded, minced
- $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp. salt
- $\frac{1}{4}$  tsp. pepper



#### Directions:

Add all ingredients to a large bowl and gently mix together. Form 2 oz. patties and grill (a stovetop grill-pan works perfectly for these) over medium/medium-high heat for 2-3 minutes per side until cooked through.

### Avocado Dressing

#### Ingredients:

- $\frac{1}{4}$  cup fresh lemon juice
- 2 tbsp. fresh (or  $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp dried) chopped basil
- 2 tbsp. fresh (or  $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp dried) chopped cilantro
- 2 tbsp. fresh (or  $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp dried) chopped parsley
- 1-2 cloves garlic, chopped
- $\frac{1}{4}$  cup plain Greek yogurt
- $\frac{1}{2}$  avocado
- 1/8 tsp. kosher salt
- 1/8 tsp. black pepper
- 2-4 tbsp. water
- Optional: 1/8 tsp. anchovy paste



#### Directions:

- Add all ingredients to a food processor or high-powered blender and process until smooth. If needed, add 1-2 tablespoons of water (at a time) to adjust for consistency.
- Cover and place in refrigerator for up to three days (I like to use mason jars for this). It's delicious when served over salmon or chicken, or over a green salad!



Obesity Action Coalition

# ABOUT THE OBESITY ACTION COALITION (OAC)

The Obesity Action Coalition (OAC) is a National non-profit organization dedicated to giving a voice to individuals affected by obesity and helping them along their journey toward better health. Our core focuses are to elevate the conversation of weight and its impact on health, improve access to obesity care, provide science-based education on obesity and its treatments, and fight to eliminate weight bias and discrimination.



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