

This month's posting will discuss a quick and easy dish called, Guacamole, which is a creation of the Hispanic communities of Texas, California, Florida and numerous countries from Central and South America, as well as all the Caribbean Islands.

Why, you may ask, are you publishing something so widely known and appreciated? Well, I have five varieties of avocados around our home, and one of those, "Joey", is producing more fruit this season than we can comfortably eat. You may also ask, how can you grow a tropical fruit in north Florida? The answer is "choose the varieties most cold weather resistant". My varieties are Brogdon and Joey, for cold resistance. Their fruit ripens for use in July and August. My most cold hardy variety is Brazos Belle, which has been propagated in south Texas and is reported to survive temperatures down to 15 degrees F. I planted it last year so it isn't in production yet. My fourth variety is Winter Mexican, so named because its fruit ripens in December and January, not because it is cold hardy; in fact, it will require artificial heat on the coldest nights in order to survive here. The fifth variety, Lulu, is a hybrid of Guatemalan and Caribbean ancestry, and would be considered somewhat vulnerable to Green Cove Springs winter temperatures.

As noted in the first paragraph, avocados are grown and eaten in many parts of the world. The three original races are Tropical (or Caribbean), Guatemalan, and Mexican. All the varieties known and unknown growing in the wilds of Central America and the mountains of Mexico have been hybridized by bees carrying the pollen from flower to flower. California produces most of the commercial avocados (varieties Fuerte and Haas). South Florida for years was a heavy producer of the Tropical and its hybrid varieties, but the value of real estate there has just about ended the commercial production there and very few of those varieties will grow north of Highway 60 in central Florida.

Avocados are prized by dieticians and health gurus because of their oil, vitamin and mineral content. Deer and squirrels quickly descend upon those ripe ones falling from our trees.

Most of you already know Guacamole and are probably fans of it. I will include here a quick and easy recipe for Guacamole. I know there is an abundant supply of recipes available and they are all commendable. The ingredients, and their quantities, are highly variable and your selection of one or the other will be influenced by your tastes. Even within a recipe you might wish to increase the garlic, lemon juice, or salt content to your own preferred levels.

If you need some avocados, drop by. The little Joeys are raining off the tree as I write this.

QUICK AND EASY GUACAMOLE

- Mash 3-4 medium sized avocados with a potato masher. Most varieties are easier to separate from the peelings with a spoon if you wait until they are soft to the "squeeze". Don't try to mash all the little chunks.
- Add 1 tablespoon of minced garlic or an equivalent amount of garlic powder.
- Add 2 tablespoons of minced onions, or an equivalent amount of onion powder.
- Add 4 tablespoons of lemon or lime juice.
- Add 1 tablespoon of chopped hot peppers.
- Add 2 tablespoons chopped tomatoes.
- Add 2-3 sprigs of chopped cilantro.
- Add 1 teaspoon black pepper. Mix well, and, above all, season to your own preferred taste.

Cover tightly with wrap to inhibit discoloration during refrigerator storage and serve with your tacos, burritos, or Mexican Casserole.

- BILL BLACKWELL

