

Avocado

The Avocado, or alligator pear, is yet another of the miraculous new world foods that we can now no longer imagine life without. It was cultivated throughout Mexico and Central America and along with the Potato, Tomato, Tobacco, Corn, Sweet potato, Pumpkin, Coco, Peanut and Cherry was introduced to Europe by the returning Spanish conquistadors. Although named by the locals who first enjoyed at least 400 varieties of this tropical fruit, it was rather appropriately seen to resemble the Spanish word for 'delicacy' *bocado*.

More than simply a delicacy however, the avocado is considered the most highly nutritionally evolved of all food plants by the US association of Natural Food & Farming. It has even been taken into outer space by NASA astronauts to help meet the higher nutritional requirements of space travel and zero gravity.

With the biochemical profile of a nut, rather than a fruit, 80% of the avocado's caloric content is in the form of easily digested monounsaturated fats, which like olive and flaxseed, are resistant to rancidity and considered very beneficial in the prevention of heart disease & motor-neuron disorders. This is essentially due to the story of Essential Fatty Acids. Very briefly, the human body can produce all but two of the fatty acids it needs. These two, linoleic acid (LA) and alpha-linolenic acid (LNA) are important in several human body systems, including the immune system and in blood pressure regulation, since they are used to make compounds such as prostaglandins. In addition to this, changes in the levels and balance of these fatty acids due to a typical Western diet rich in all the wrong fats & low in all the right ones is alleged to be associated with depression and behavioral change, including violence. This could be because the brain also has increased amounts of fatty acids, so along with Flaxseed oil be sure to increase your consumption of Guacamole as the grey matter starts aging, and as your children are in their key periods of development.

I guess the final question is that much maligned question of cholesterol. Firstly, cholesterol itself is a compound that is synthesized by animals, and so is obviously not found in avocados at all. Secondly, cholesterol is not the boogey man it was first thought to be, but part of a typically much more complicated question of balance, rather than a causative disease factor in itself; and thirdly, avocados have actually been shown to LOWER blood cholesterol levels from anywhere between 8 and 42%!!

So spread your organic avocados around without fear to insure a healthy heart, and happy brain!

- The Barefoot Doctor