

Astounding Avocados

Avocados known for their smooth, creamy flesh and bumpy skin are also known as “alligator pears.” These excellent fruits are a popular food across many cultures.

One-third of a medium avocado has 80 calories. It contributes nearly 20 vitamins and minerals, making it a healthy, nutrient-dense choice.

Look for a balance between firmness, color, and skin appearance to determine ripeness.

Look at the color of the skin of the avocados for any that are darker in color or any large indentations, as these fruits could be riper than the rest or may be bruised. Take the avocado in the palm of your hand and gently squeeze it without using your fingertips, as this can cause bruising. Then, check the firmness of the avocado. If the avocado does not yield, it is considered “firm” and should be ripe in a few days.

Firm, unripe fresh avocados will have a bright green color. Firm avocados are perfect for purchasing a few days (approximately 4 to 5 days) before you plan on serving them, ensuring they will be perfectly ripe and ready to eat.

Ripe, ready-to-eat avocados may have a darker color, but color can vary, so it is best to go by firmness as well as color. It will feel slightly soft but not feel “mushy” to the touch. Ripe fruit is perfect for that day; if you plan to eat it in a day or two, store it in the refrigerator to prevent overripping or spoilage.

Overripened avocados will feel very mushy to the touch; they may have deep indentations and have darker brown or yellowish-colored flesh throughout the inside. It will also have a rancid smell that some describe as smelling like “squash” or “pumpkin-like.”

There’s no denying the satisfaction that comes from enjoying a perfectly ripe avocado. However, encountering an unripe avocado can be disappointing, especially when you crave that deliciously creamy texture over your perfectly toasted slice of bread. Fear not! There are tricks and tips to speed up the ripening process, ensuring your avocados are ready to eat precisely when you need them.

To ripen avocados, the best way is to place them in a brown paper bag with a banana or an apple for two to three days until they are ripe.

Whether for guacamoles and dips, slicing and garnishing, smoothies, or cooking and baking, understanding the optimal ripeness for different recipes can elevate your meals.

For instance, making guacamole may require perfectly ripe avocados with a creamy texture, while slicing and garnishing may benefit from slightly firmer, yet still ripe, avocados. Cooking and baking with avocados may require varying degrees of ripeness, depending on the recipe.

Unripe whole avocados can be stored at room temperature until they are ripe. Ripe whole avocados can be refrigerated to extend shelf life. Uncut, ripe avocados can be safely stored in the fridge for up to 7 days. They will continue to ripen, just not as fast. The oxidation process, commonly referred to as “browning,” that occurs in cut avocados and guacamole can be

prevented by lightly coating the exposed flesh with lime or lemon juice and limiting exposure by covering tightly with clear plastic wrap to reduce oxygen exposure.

When it comes to the culinary boundaries of avocados, there are none! Avocado goes incredibly well with almost anything, including soups, salads, dips, desserts, smoothies, and as an addition to breakfast, or even on its own, sprinkled with salt and pepper.