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How to drink an avocado

By Jeremy N Smith
February 04, 2009

Total and per capita avocado consumption in the United States has doubled since 2001. Much of that, though, comes from guacamole alone, according to the Hass Avocado Board, a California trade group promoting the fruit's most popular variety.

But few Americans realize the avocado is even better sipped than dipped.

For enlightenment, visit the restaurants or cafe of a Vietnamese immigrant community and seek out *sinh to bo*, a sweet, rich, satisfying avocado shake—instant comfort food once you overcome the initial oddity.

“One of the most intriguing things for anyone observing Vietnamese restaurant patrons is the consumption of mysterious colored drinks, many of which include a vibrant green layer,” Meera Freeman writes in her cookbook, “The Flavours of Vietnam.”

In addition to avocado, other ingredients that cause the curiosity include mung beans, agar jelly, kumquats and green tapioca.

Pho 777 in Chicago's Uptown neighborhood sells durian, guanabana and jackfruit shakes as well as avocado varieties.

Mixed with condensed or coconut milk, sugar syrup and crushed ice, “these drinks are known as *chè* in Vietnamese,” Freeman writes, “and are a cross between a drink and a dessert.”

Tempted? To make an avocado shake at home, combine in a blender avocado, condensed milk, ice cubes and a sugar syrup. You can add chocolate syrup, which makes a good thing even better.

Don't be surprised if overindulgence adds a spring to your step or leaves your hair shining with supermodel splendor. An energy powerhouse, the avocado contains a higher percentage of oil and protein than any other fruit.

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Recipe: Avocado shake

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Prep: 10 minutes **Cook:** 5 minutes

Makes: 2 servings

Adapted from "The Flavours of Vietnam," by Meera Freeman.

2 tablespoons plus 2 teaspoons water

4 teaspoons sugar

1 avocado, halved, pitted

12 ice cubes

2 teaspoons sweetened condensed milk

1 Heat water to a boil in small saucepan; add the sugar. Cook without stirring until sugar dissolves completely; cool.

2 Scoop the flesh from the avocado into a blender container; add the ice cubes, condensed milk and sugar syrup. Blend until pale green and creamy. Serve in tall glasses with long spoons.

Nutrition information

Per serving: 211 calories, 60% of calories from fat, 15 g fat, 2 g saturated fat, 2 mg cholesterol, 20 g carbohydrates, 2 g protein, 15 mg sodium, 7 g fiber

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