

Guacamole with Pomegranate Seeds

Mastering guacamole is a “must” for anyone claiming kitchen chops. Here’s where to start: Take a hint from your favorite Mexican restaurant, where they grind aromatics into a flavorful paste in a *molcajete*, that cool mortar made of volcanic rock, then fold in chunks of avocado. If you have the arm strength — or an audience — use a *molcajete* or a mortar and pestle. But really, a mini food processor works just as well. We’ve added pomegranate seeds to bring a nice pop of sweetness. For dipping, have plenty of plantain chips or tortillas handy.

See Cook’s Notes on avocados and cilantro.

Ingredients

¼ cup finely chopped white onion
2 to 3 tablespoons finely chopped serrano or jalapeno chiles, finely chopped, about 2 serranos or 1 large jalapeno (seeds optional, keep them if you like it spicy))
2 teaspoons salt
½ cup chopped cilantro (see Cook’s Note below)
4 ripe avocados (about 6 ounces each)
1 lime, juiced (about 1-2 tablespoons)
1/4 cup pomegranate seeds, for garnish

special equipment

1 mini food processor, *molcajete*, or mortar and pestle

Directions

Put the onions, chiles, salt, and half of the cilantro into a mini food processor and process into a paste, scraping the bowl of the processor down as needed. Alternatively, use a *molcajete* or mortar and pestle to pound the ingredients into a paste. Taste the paste; if the chiles aren’t spicy enough, add some more. If your food processor, *molcajete* or mortar isn’t large enough to hold all the avocado, transfer the paste to a bigger bowl.

Cut the avocados in half and remove the pits. Without cutting into the peels, score the avocado halves in their shells into bite-size chunks. Scoop out the avocado flesh with a large spoon, and use a fork or a potato masher to mash it into the paste. Keep it chunky ... unless you like a smooth guac, then go to town. Fold in the lime juice and remaining cilantro, then taste and adjust the seasonings. Sprinkle the guacamole with the pomegranate seeds and serve.

Cook’s Notes

Ripe avocados are becoming more and more readily available, but if yours need more ripening, place them in a brown paper bag with an apple or banana and keep in a warm place to quicken the process. Once they're ripe, they can be stored in a plastic bag in the fridge for a couple of days.

If you can't serve the guac immediately, hold off on garnishing with the pomegranate seeds. You can store the guacamole for a little while by pressing a piece of plastic wrap directly onto the surface of the guac so that it isn't exposed to air. Chill until ready to serve. Exposure to the air will cause the guac to turn brown, but just scrape off any discolored parts. It's still fine. Garnish with the pomegranate seeds just before serving.

The whole cilantro plant, including the roots, can be used in cooking. Most recipes call for just the leaves, but the stems have a lot of flavor as well and can add texture to the final dish.

total time: 15 minutes

active prep: 15 minutes

serves: 4 to 6 as a snack (about 2½ cups)

difficulty: easy