



A GUIDE FOR FRESH PRODUCE RETAIL STAFF



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Australian Avocados – A Guide for Fresh Produce Retail Staff

PURPOSE OF THIS GUIDE

Avocado consumers want the perfect avocado - a fruit that has been grown for quality, picked at the optimum maturity, handled with care along the supply chain, ripened to bring out the best flavours and presented at its best, ready for consumption. The challenge is to meet the consumers' expectations every time.

Australian avocados are recognised for their high quality and freshness. They are usually airfreighted to our export markets, meaning they are the freshest available and provide added shelf life for retailers.

This guide aims to build the knowledge and skills of those involved in retailing Australian avocados. By handling and presenting Australian avocados more effectively, we hope our retailers can satisfy their customers and increase profits from the category.

This guide is complemented by other resources available from the Avocados Australia website:

For more details and access to resources visit:

www.avocado.org.au/global



Acknowledgement

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ABOUT AVOCADOS

Avocados are a wonderful nutrient-dense fruit, that are naturally low in sugar and sodium and contain a range of vital nutrients needed for a healthy body.

They are rich in:

- Fibre
- Healthy fats
- Vitamin C & E
- Folate
- Potassium;

and are a great source of nutrition for toddlers, expecting mothers and older people.



AUSTRALIAN AVOCADO PRODUCTION AND SUPPLY

Australian farmers produce about 70,000 tonnes (2018) of avocados a year.

These are usually supplied to market in 5.5 kilogram single layer trays or 10 kilogram bulk boxes.

By growing in different production regions across Australia and planting different varieties, our farmers can supply avocados all year round.

Varieties

There are two main avocado varieties grown and marketed by Australian farmers – Hass and Shepard.

Hass

Hass is the main variety exported by Australia.

It has a distinctive pebbly skin which usually turns from green to a rich purplish–black colour as it ripens.



Shepard

Shepard avocados are a ‘green skin’ variety. They are referred to as ‘green skins’ as their skin stays green as they ripen. They represent about 15% of total Australian avocado production and are available from February to May each year.



AVOCADO QUALITY AND RIPENESS

Good quality avocados, no matter which variety, should always look fresh; have no skin blemishes or other visible damage; have no internal defects such as bruising, rots or flesh discolouration.

The fruit you receive in store should have been through the appropriate quality control to ensure they are mature and ripen evenly.

Unlike other fruits, avocados don't start to ripen until they are picked from the tree. Once picked, avocados start to ripen naturally. In modern avocado supply chains, avocados are treated to ensure the fruit ripens evenly and fruit quality will be optimal.

UNDERSTANDING AVOCADO RIPENING

All avocados soften as they ripen. Hass avocados generally change colour from green to a purplish-black colour as they ripen. However, the colour change is not always consistent. Hence, firmness, rather than skin colour is the better indicator of ripeness.

To determine the ripeness stage, **gentle pressure** should be applied to the stem end of the fruit. As the fruit ripens the 'give' in the fruit increases.



Different ripeness stages – for your customers

To simplify the message when communicating with retail customers we often only refer to three stages of ripeness: hard, firm ripe and soft ripe. To understand how to determine ripeness for these stages of ripeness, the following applies:



hard: olive green wait 2-3 days before eating	hard: No or only slight 'give' with moderate to strong thumb pressure
firm ripe: green black ready to eat – perfect to cube slice spoon	firm ripe: Top of fruit deforms 2-3mm with slight thumb pressure
soft ripe: purplish black ready to eat – perfect to spread mash mix	soft ripe: Top of fruit deforms 2-3mm with gentle thumb pressure

UNDERSTANDING FRUIT QUALITY AND TEMPERATURE

Internal fruit quality defects

The major causes of poor fruit quality are bruising, rots, vascular browning and grey-brown flesh.

All of these conditions can be avoided if good handling and storage practices are followed by those in the supply chain and at retail level.



Bruising

Rots

Vascular browning

Grey-brown flesh

Source: DAF Queensland

Bruising results when fruit is not handled with care.

Rots can start to occur in fruit that is at an advanced stage of ripeness, has been in the supply chain for too long and/or has been ripened at high temperatures.

Vascular browning can occur where fruit has been held for too long prior or at incorrect temperatures in the supply chain.

Grey-brown flesh can occur when fruit is held for too long and at the incorrect temperatures, or where the ripening processes is interrupted by poor temperature management.

UNDERSTANDING TEMPERATURE MANAGEMENT

Storing avocados at the correct temperature is important to maintain quality. Fruit that is not managed at the correct temperatures or held for too long can develop a range of quality defects including those shown above.



If you would like more information on quality disorders and temperature management refer to our other resources:

- *A Guide for Fresh Produce Retail Managers'*
- *'A Guide for Supply Chain Quality Managers'*
- *'Avocado Fruit Quality Problem Solver'*

Available at: www.avocado.org.au/global

YOUR ROLE IN MANAGING AVOCADO QUALITY

Monitoring fruit quality and ripeness

It is most important that the customer has a great eating experience every time they purchase an Australian avocado - by doing so they will continue to buy the product.

To maximise customer satisfaction and category profit, it is essential that avocados are handled and merchandised correctly. If the fruit is of good quality and size and at the correct ripeness stage, then it should be perfect for your customers and easy to sell if it is priced right.

MANAGING STOCK

Below are some tips on managing fruit so that it meets the customer's expectation as well as reducing waste and increasing the profit of your avocado category:

- **Handle fruit with care** to reduce damage. Always stack packages correctly. If practical, keep fruit in its original packaging to minimise handling of individual fruit.
- **Ordering fruit.** Ask your manager about having fruit delivered at different ripeness stages, so you can optimise stock control. If possible, order smaller volumes more often, rather than storing fruit.
- **Receiving fruit.** Assess the quality and ripeness of fruit that you have available for sale, so you can develop your strategy of how it is to be handled and sold. If fruit is received in a poor condition, contact your manager immediately to determine a suitable course of action.
- **Holding fruit.** Minimise the storage time of avocados before they are displayed. Ensure fruit is held at optimum temperature, where possible.
- **Displaying fruit.** The ripest fruit should be prioritised for sale.

MANAGING DISPLAYS

Below are some hints and tips to help you get the best from the avocados on display:

- **Handling fruit.** Always ensure handle fruit gently when filling the display.
- **Setting up the display.** Don't tumble fill the display, over-fill displays or stack fruit more than two layers deep. Consider adopting a 'ripe and ready' approach (see next page).
- **Display time.** Try to reduce the time fruit is on display before it is sold. This reduces damage caused by customers.
- **Maintain the display.** Regularly check the display and replenish stock as necessary. Display the ripest fruit on top, towards the front of the display and less ripe fruit at the bottom and back of the display – or - design the display so that ripe fruit is separated from fruit that is still ripening (see image on next page).
- **Manage waste.** Remove damaged fruit from the display. Avocados that have been dropped, damaged, are over-soft or have rots, should be discarded. Record the amount and reason that fruit is discounted or discarded. This helps to identify stock management solutions to minimise waste.

MERCHANDISING TIPS

- Display avocados with tomatoes, onions and lemons – to provide colour contrast on the display and inspiration for customers.
- Cross-merchandise avocados with other complementary products like corn chips and chilli sauce to drive incremental sales.
- Offer a multi-buy option (e.g. buy 2 for \$5.00 or \$2.99 each) to increase sales volumes.
- Give customers choice - different varieties, different sized fruit and/or fruit in bags or punnets.
- Provide Point-of Sale material on displays to educate consumers.
- Display discounted avocados away from the main display.

'ripe and ready' PROGRAM

Research has shown that many customers: prefer to buy fruit to eat that evening or the next day; are not confident in selecting a ripe avocado; and handle fruit less, reducing bruising, when they are provided with information about how ripe the fruit is and when it will be ready to eat.

A 'ripe and ready' program involves consistently providing ripe avocados for sale which are suitable for consumption within the next day; and helping your customers identify these avocados.

To assist customers, fruit can be presented in two ways:

- Ripe and firm ripe fruit are identified by stickers and are placed at the top and front of the display.
- The display is segregated into fruit that is ripe/firm ripe and suitable for immediate or next day consumption; and fruit that is ready for eating in the next 2-3 days. Ripe/ firm ripe fruit is then identified either by signage and/or stickers.

Delivering fruit that is ready for consumption through a 'ripe and ready' program has shown to increase sales by up to 30%. If you are planning to implement a 'ripe and ready' program, talk to your supplier about their capacity to provide fruit of suitable ripeness and other support which may be available, such as the training and Point-of-Sale material.



australian avocados
ripe and ready to eat

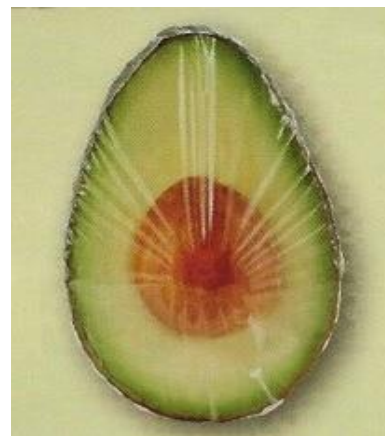


 **australian avocados**
www.australianavocados.com.au

HINTS AND TIPS FOR CUSTOMERS

Help your customers understand avocados better!!

- At home, avocados are best stored in the fruit bowl at room temperature.
- If they have reached the desired ripeness the whole fruit can be stored in the fridge for 2-3 days.
- Unripe avocados should not be put in the refrigerator as they won't ripen properly once taken out.
- If the avocado is not ripe (hard), ripening can be sped up by putting the fruit in a brown paper bag with a banana or apple. These fruits help accelerate ripening.
- To store a cut avocado, sprinkle it with lemon or lime juice and store it in an air-tight container or cover it in cling wrap and refrigerate. Eat in 1-2 days.
- Encourage your customers to try avocados in new ways.



For recipe ideas

Avocados are extremely versatile. They can be used in both sweet and savoury dishes; and can be incorporated into meals at breakfast, lunch and dinner. They make fantastic smoothies and can be used in desserts, baking, dips, salads, burgers, pizzas and a range of other dishes.

To find out more about preparing and using Australian avocados and great recipe ideas visit www.australianavocados.com.au/recipes.



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