

MEDITERRANEAN UMAMI GUACAMOLE

SERVES: 4-6

This version of guacamole takes a detour from its Mexican roots and instead relies on a Mediterranean flavor profile. The avocado provides the creamy base which is then spiked with a series of flavorful and slightly assertive ingredients.

This guacamole is also packed with umami (pepperoni, dried tomatoes, Parmesan, and MSG) which provides a savory flavor that lasts long on the palate.

INGREDIENTS

- 2 oz. thinly sliced pepperoni
- 2 ripened Haas avocados, halved, pitted, and peeled
- 1 ½ Tablespoons red onion, finely chopped
- 3 ½ Tablespoons freshly squeezed lemon juice
- ¼ cup dried tomatoes, finely chopped
- 3 Tablespoons Italian parsley leaves, minced
- 3 Tablespoons high quality green olives, finely chopped
- 1 oz. finely grated Parmesan
- ¼ teaspoon MSG
- 1 small Serrano chile, minced
- Several pinches salt (to taste)

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Cut the pepperoni slices into ¼-inch strips.
2. Spread the strips out on a non-stick baking sheet or a baking sheet lined with parchment paper.

3. Place in a pre-heated 300° F oven and bake until the pepperoni becomes crispy (about 10 minutes.)
4. Remove from oven and immediately remove the pepperoni from the baking sheet. Let cool and reserve.
5. Place avocado in a bowl and mash with a fork or potato masher keeping it slightly chunky.
6. Gently mix in the red onion, lemon juice, dried tomatoes, parsley, olives, Parmesan, MSG, Serrano chile, and salt.
7. Place in a serving bowl. Garnish the top of the guacamole with crispy pepperoni. Serve with pita chips or grilled pita bread.

IDEAS TO SPICE UP A CLASSICAL GUACAMOLE:

Great guacamole is basically a balancing act between fat (avocado), acid (citrus traditionally), salt, assertive ingredients (raw onion and chilies), and aromatic ingredients (cilantro). Focusing on ways to add sweet or umami elements adds greater flavor complexity and originality to the classic guacamole. Consider the following guacamole variations (based on a recipe for 2 large avocados):

- **Diced fruits:** Soft, juicy, and aromatic fruits like pineapple or mango (2/3 cup) work best. Add a squeeze of orange juice along with the lemon juice. Sprinkle the finished guacamole with pomegranate seeds or finely minced candied ginger (1 ½ Tablespoons) just before serving.
- **Kimchee:** Kimchee is all the rage and for good reason—it is full of flavor, heat, and umami. Finely chop (2/3 cup) and add to the guacamole.
- **MSG:** MSG is umami in its purest form. Sprinkling it into guacamole (1/4 + teaspoon) significantly ups the umami (boldness and richness) while not adding other flavor profiles.
- **Mexican chorizo:** Add 1 cup of crumbled, fully cooked and cooled, Mexican chorizo to the guacamole.
- **Mushroom:** Sauté 1 oz. of finely chopped rehydrated dried shiitake caps and 2 oz. fresh shiitake caps in 1 Tablespoon of olive oil. When cooked, remove from the pan and let cool. Add the cooked and cooled mushrooms along with 1 Tablespoon of mirin to your guacamole.