



HOLA AMIGOS,

Thanks for getting involved in El Pastor's Grow On avocado project.

We've put together some more information for you about where we source our avocados, how to continue growing the seedling - whether planting or keeping in an ILEX vase - and a few other tips and tricks.

SOURCING THROUGH AVOCARGO

At El Pastor, we source our avocados through our partners, Avocargo. Due to the volcanic soil, the perfect micro-climate and the resulting fruits' higher oil content, avocados grown in Mexico are far superior in both taste and texture compared to others on the market. They were also not previously available in the UK. These facts drove Avocargo's owner and operator, Stewart Browne, to build a business importing Mexican avocados into the UK. Stewart formed personal relationships with trusted avocado farmers (and now, friends), and became well-aware of the political, economical and climatic issues faced by avocado growers, as well as the importance of complete traceability and certification.

Many of Avocargo's partner ranches and packing houses are now fully certified by Global Gap, one of the world's leading quality authorities and Avocargo also works closely with Control Union, a widely respected company who ensure quality control and best practice, from field to packing house to final destination. This means that we can trace all payments around our avocados, from seed, to fruit, to picking, packing, shipping and to delivery to our customers in the UK.

GROWING YOUR SEEDLING

Avocados are relatively easy to germinate. From stone to seedling, it takes about 3 to 4 weeks - we've done this bit for you.

If you purchased an ILEX vase, all you need to do is follow the instructions in the box; fill the vase to the base with water, pop the stone in the holder - root down - and place the vase in a warm, partly sunny location. Your seedling can happily stay in the vase for up to a year, but if you'd like to use your vase for a new seedling, you can pot the germinated seedling whenever you like.



POTTING & REPOTTING

If you took home the seedling on its own, it is ready to pot! Avocado seedlings - specifically, their roots - require space to grow and drain. We recommend starting with a 13cm diameter pot.

Add a layer of broken crockery to the bottom of the pot (this helps with drainage), then cover loosely with a mix of soil and compost.

Make space for the avocado's roots within the soil, then fill the pot, patting soil down gently. Ensure that the stone is buried securely in the soil, but only partly. A little less than half the stone should sit above the soil.

Water well and leave to drain. Repot each year (or when you see fit) into a larger pot.

WATER & LIGHT

Avocados are tropical plants and typically thrive in the understorey of rainforests - therefore they grow best in bright, but dappled sunshine. Remember, every plant is different, so if your plant's leaves begin to brown, try a different location.

Always use tepid water when watering your avocado and aim to keep the soil slightly damp (not wet!). This might mean watering your plant daily, depending on home temperature and humidity levels. Every so often, give your plant a deep soak. Leaves may droop, wilt or drop if your plant is thirsty. Leaves may yellow if it's drowning, so ease up on the water if so.

FRUIT & LEAVES

To manage expectations, successfully getting to a stage where your avocado plant produces fruit, is...unlikely in this climate. However, the plant itself is beautiful and a bit more interesting than the usual houseplants. And whilst you may not produce avocados, there are other edible benefits: the leaf.

Avocado leaves are used often in Mexican cooking, producing a subtle earthy anise flavour. They can be used as a bed for roasting fish, meat or veggies, or added to dishes cooked 'en pappillotte'. When the leaves are dried they can be added to soups, stews and moles. One of our favourite recipes in which we use avocado leaves is El Pastor's 'frijoles refritos' or refried beans, so we thought we'd share the recipe with you.

To dry your leaves, pick a few healthy leaves, rinse and pat dry. You can use a dehydrator to dry them, or turn your oven on to the lowest temperature, arrange the leaves in a single layer on a baking sheet. Cook for an hour or two, turning every 20 minutes, until the leaves are dry and brittle.



EL PASTOR'S FRIJOLES REFritos

Makes enough for four.

400 g black beans
30ml liquid from beans
1/3 a white onion
1 clove of garlic
2 Thai chillies (optional)
30ml pomace oil/vegetable oil
2g avocado leaf
Salt
Oaxaca-style cheese or halloumi (optional)

1. Cook the diced onion, garlic and chilli in oil over medium heat, stirring until fragrant and softened.
2. Add the black beans and their liquid and cook until the mixture starts to bubble, then season with half the salt.
3. Take the mixture off the heat, leave to cool for 15 minutes and add the dried avocado leaf.
4. Blend and season with remaining salt.
5. Top with grated Oaxaca style cheese (or use halloumi if you like)
6. Serve with totopos or as a side with any Mexican feast.

Share your avocado growing updates with us:

@tacos_el_pastor

@avocado_vases

GROW ON!