

Fresh Guacamole



TIP: The key to making full flavored guacamole is using **ripe avocados**. Avocados are ripe when you can press on the avocado skin with your thumb using a little more pressure than you'd use to grip a pencil firmly (left photo) and leave an indent as shown in circled area in the picture on the right.



The problem: **avocados usually come to market underripe and firm**. To ripen firm avocados as quickly as possible at home, place them in a paper bag (NOT plastic bag - plastic bags don't allow for the air exchange needed for ripening; paper bags do), close the bag loosely, and store them out of direct sunlight at room temperature for 1-2 days - or longer for extremely firm, unripe avocados.



Preparation Time: about 10 minutes

Ingredients (for 3-4)

2 Ripe Avocados

1/2 Onion (I'm using a red onion, but any onion will work)

3 Garlic Cloves

Handful of Fresh Cilantro

1 Lime

1 Teaspoon or a Good Shake of Ground Cumin

1/2 - 1 Jalapeño Pepper

1/2 Teaspoon Salt (optional)

Ground Black Pepper



Equipment

Large Bowl

Cutting Board

Wide-Bladed Sharp (Chef's) Knife

Fork

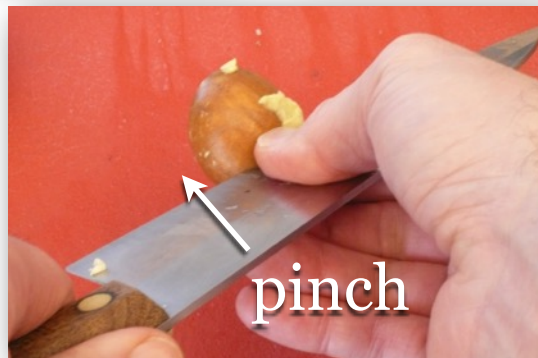
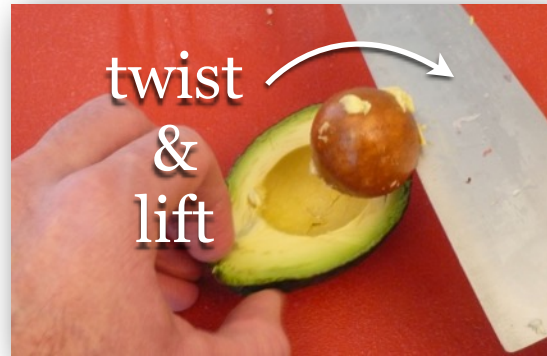
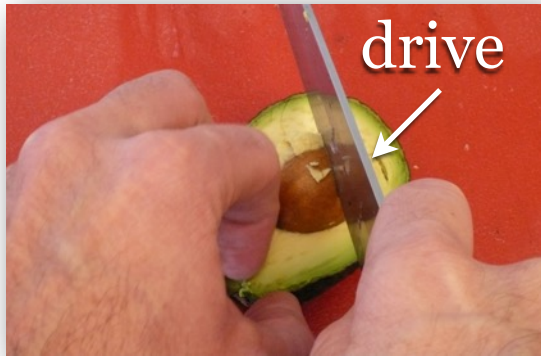


1. Cut **2 ripe avocados** in half lengthwise around their **seed**, and twist the **avocado halves** apart.

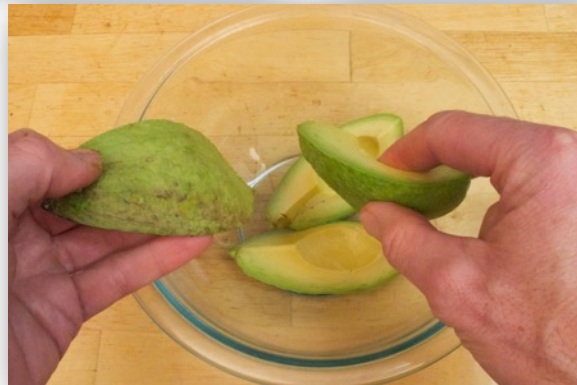
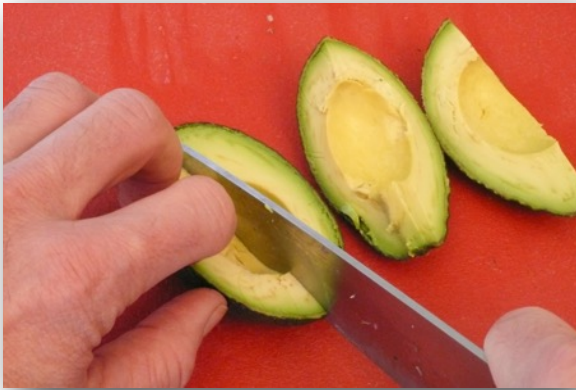


Remove the **seed** by holding the **avocado half** with the **seed** still attached seed side up on the cutting board - **making sure your fingers are not in the intended knife path** - and driving the the long, sharp edge of the knife blade into the **seed**. Twist and lift the **seed** from the **avocado half**.

Remove the **seed** safely from the knife by pinching down on the **seed** from the back, dull side of the knife blade as shown below.



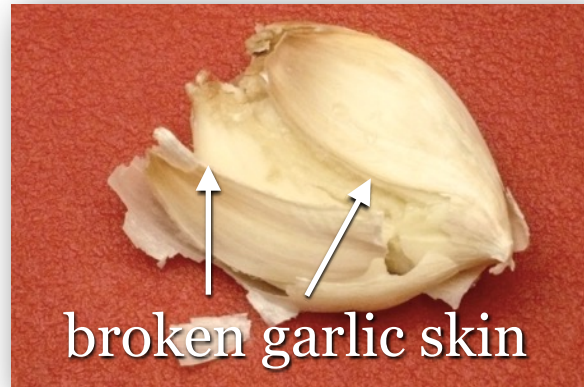
Cut **each avocado half** in half again lengthwise into quarters, peel off the **skin** from **each avocado quarter**, and put the **avocado quarters** into a large bowl.



2. Pull **3 garlic cloves** from a **garlic bulb**.



Put the **garlic cloves** on the cutting board. Cover one **garlic clove** a time with the flat side of a wide bladed (chef's) knife. Press on the top flat side of the knife with the heel of your hand until you hear and feel the **garlic skins** pop open.



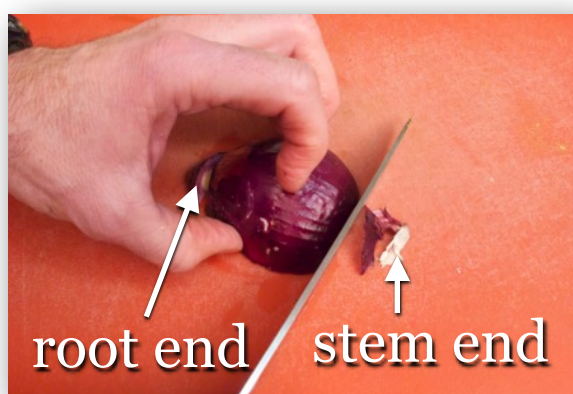
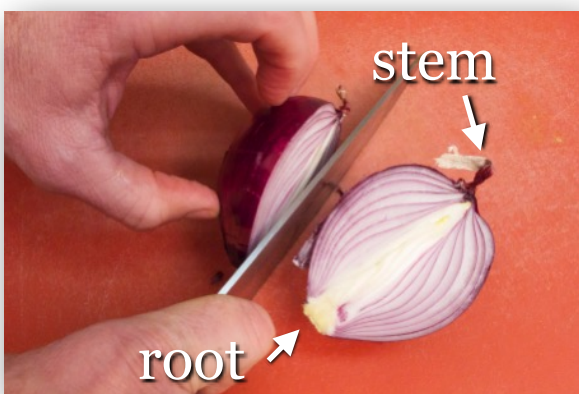
Peel off the **garlic skin**. Then hold the **garlic cloves** securely to the cutting board with curled fingers, and let the side of the knife blade touch and glide along your curled knuckles as you cut the **garlic** into thin slices about 1/8 inch (3 mm) wide.



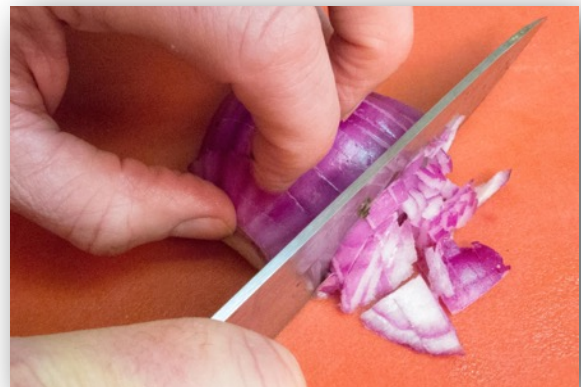
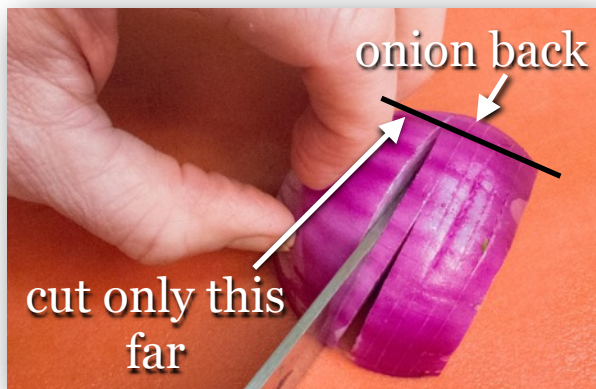
Finish by chopping the **garlic slices** into smaller pieces about as shown below.



3. Cut an **onion** in half lengthwise, cut off the **stem and root ends** from **one of the onion halves**, and peel off the **onion skin**.



Cut cross section slices about 1/8 inch (3 mm) wide into the **onion**, making sure not to cut through the **onion back**, which will keep the **onion half** intact like the binding of a book when you next cut those slices in cross section into pieces also about 1/8 inch (3 mm) wide as shown in the picture to the right below.



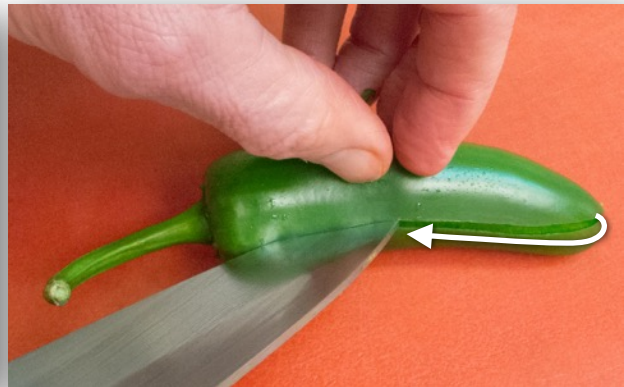
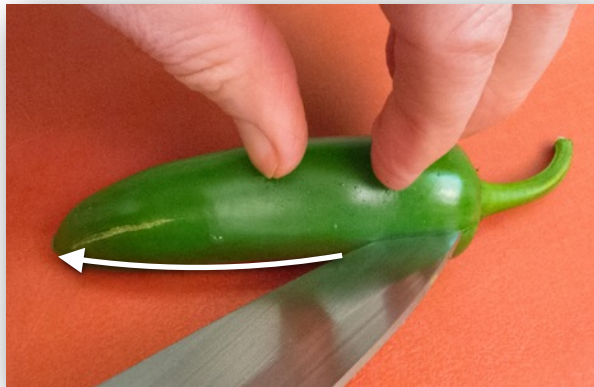
4. Rinse **a handful of fresh cilantro** with cold water and twist and tear the **stem bottoms** from their **leafy cilantro tops**.



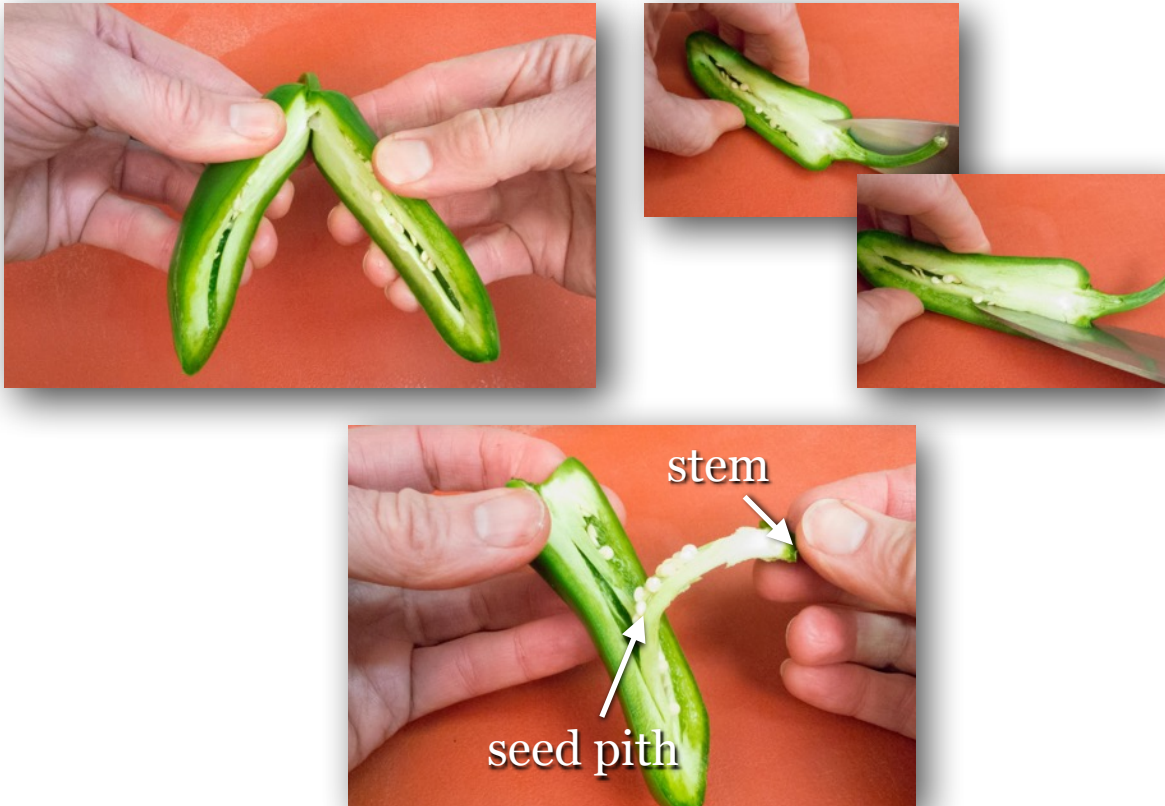
Hold the **cilantro** to the cutting board with curled fingers and chop it into smaller pieces about as shown in the picture below right.



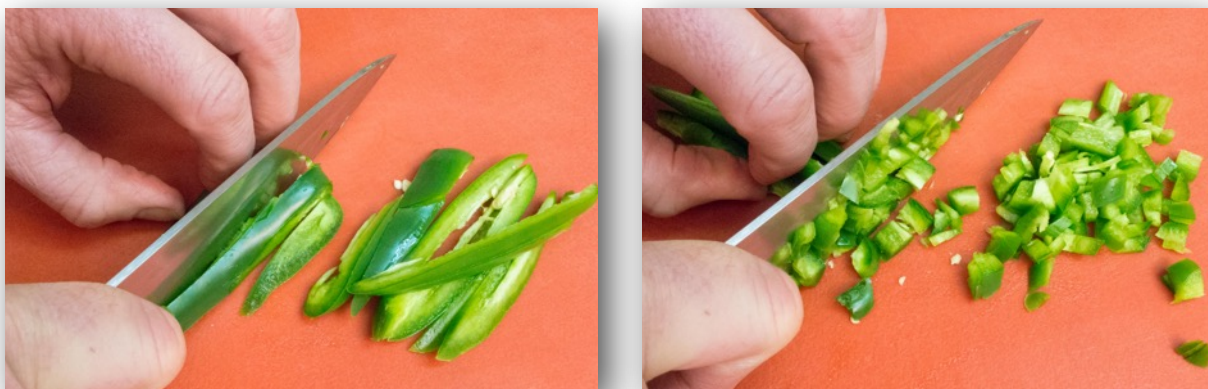
5. Cut a **jalapeño pepper** in half lengthwise starting from the top of one side of the **pepper** next to the **stem** and continuing that cut around the **pepper** to the other side of the **stem** at the top of the **pepper**.



Pull the **jalapeño pepper halves** apart and remove the **seed pith** and **stem**.



Cut **1-2 jalapeño pepper halves** (depending on how spicy you want the guacamole - you can start with less and add more to taste) into lengthwise strips $\frac{1}{8}$ - $\frac{1}{4}$ inch (3-6 mm) wide, and then cut those strips in cross section also into pieces also $\frac{1}{8}$ - $\frac{1}{4}$ inch (3-6 mm) wide.



NOTE: After chopping the **jalapeño pepper**, make sure to give your hands a good scrubbing wash with soap and water to remove the pepper's **capsaicin** (the active component of chili peppers that makes them spicy hot) from your hands, which might otherwise cause a burning sensation in your fingers.



6. Cut a **lime** in half.



7. Put the **chopped ingredients** in a bowl and add the following:



juice of both lime halves (use a fork to help squeeze the juice from the lime if the lime is hard to squeeze as shown in the insert picture below)



an optional **1/2 teaspoon** (or as much as shown below) **salt**



a **good crunch of ground black pepper**



a **good shake of ground cumin**



7. Finish by mashing the **ingredients** with a fork...



...until the **guacamole** is still slightly chunky and looks about like this.



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