

The 2015-2020 Dietary Guidelines: What Are They and What Do They Mean for California Avocados?

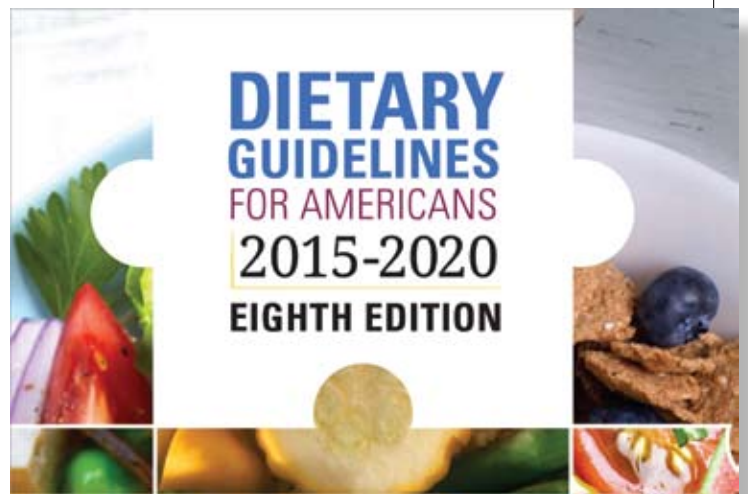
By Andrea N. Giancoli, MPH, RD

On January 7, 2016, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, in partnership with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, jointly released the long awaited 8th edition of the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2015-2020* (DGAs). You've likely heard something about this in the news, but may still be asking yourself, "What exactly are the DGAs and what do they have to do with avocados?"

2015-2020 DGAs - The What and Why

Based on the latest scientific information and updated every five years, the DGAs are the U.S. government's food and beverage recommendations intended to help Americans make healthier food choices.

The new DGAs consist of the following five overarching guidelines (see table for more detailed information on each guideline):



Avocados and the 2015-2020 DGAs

In taking a closer look at this edition of the DGAs, there is a notable language change from previous releases. This edition provides specific advice to *shift to* choosing healthier, nutrient dense food and beverages, while simultaneously *shifting away* from less healthful choices.

Indeed, a key DGA recommendation is to consume less than 10 percent of daily calories from saturated fats and *shift to* food choices higher in polyunsaturated and mono-unsaturated fats. This recommendation, or message, is a perfect fit for avocados, which are known to be a source of unsaturated fats with little saturated fat. More than 50 percent of an avocado's fat content comes from monounsaturated fats.

Avocados also fare well when it comes to food groups encouraged by the 2015-2020 DGAs. While botanically classified as a fruit, in the DGAs avocados reside in both the vegetable group and the oils group. The oils group is not considered a stand-alone food group, but is recognized within the DGAs as part of a healthy eating pattern delivering a major source of essential fatty acids and vitamin E.

This recognition suits avocados because they contain beneficial fats and many other essential nutrients. Specifi-

The infographic is titled 'Follow a healthy eating pattern across the lifespan.' and lists five key guidelines. It includes icons for various food groups and a list of limits to avoid. The guidelines are: 1. Follow a healthy eating pattern across the lifespan. 2. Focus on variety, nutrient density, and amount. 3. Limit calories from added sugars and saturated fats and reduce sodium intake. 4. Shift to healthier food and beverage choices. 5. Support healthy eating patterns for all. The infographic also includes a section for 'A healthy eating pattern includes:' with icons for Fruits, Vegetables, Protein, Dairy, Grains, and Oils. A second section for 'A healthy eating pattern limits:' includes icons for Saturated fats and trans fats, Added sugars, and Sodium.

- Follow a healthy eating pattern across the lifespan
- Focus on variety, nutrient density and amount you consume
- Limit calories from added sugars and saturated fats and reduce sodium intake
- Shift to healthier food and beverage choices
- Support healthy eating patterns for all

cally, avocados are highlighted in the DGAs for supplying monounsaturated fats to the diet. According to the American Heart Association, when eaten in moderation and used to replace saturated fats or trans fats, monounsaturated fats can have a beneficial effect on health by helping to reduce bad cholesterol levels in your blood.

The Avocado Industry's Response to the DGAs

The Hass Avocado Board (HAB) is taking the lead on evaluating and determining how to leverage the key recommendations of the DGAs to further drive avocado consumption.

On the consumer communications front, HAB has drafted brand new messaging for use by the California Avocado Commission (CAC) and other industry partners. The new messaging aligns avocado nutrition attributes to healthy eating patterns conforming to the 2015-2020 DGAs and their key recommendations. This kind of messaging helps to encourage increased avocado consumption in the marketplace.

The California Avocado Commission's DGA Activities

Since the January release of the 2015-2020 DGAs, CAC has been busy updating and building new resources to spread the word to consumers, influencers and stakeholders about California avocados' starring role in a healthy diet that aligns with the DGAs. CAC's consumer outreach activities and resources are designed to advance California avocado purchasing and consumption relevant to following the 2015-2020 DGA guidelines. Here are a handful of initiatives CAC has been working on to get the word out:

- Refreshing the nutrition content on CaliforniaAvocado.com, updating the DGA content and adding the DGA's key recommendations. Visit CAC's Dietary Guidelines webpage to learn more (californiaavocado.com/nutrition/dietary-guidelines)
- Promoting and sharing the Commission's DGA-themed 7-Day Plant Based Meal Plan showcasing California avocados as part of a healthy eating pattern. The meal plan was created by CAC Registered Dietitian Nutritionist (RDN) Ambassador Katie Ferraro and has been posted on the consumer website, featured in a March The Scoop blog, and promoted on CAC's and RDN Ambassadors' social media channels. To promote broader distribution, the meal plan was provided to select media-friendly RDNs encouraging them to share the plan with their clients and on their professional social media channels
- Partnering with the *Produce for Better Health Foundation's MyPlate – Half Your Plate* program to create a

DGA-compliant California Avocado Super Summer Wrap recipe now featured on the CAC website



To learn more about the 2015-2020 DGAs, visit the official DGA site at <http://health.gov/dietaryguidelines/2015/guidelines/>. 🥑



Andrea N. Giancoli is a registered dietitian and nutrition communications consultant for the California Avocado Commission. Her valuable media know-how and nutrition expertise help the Commission deliver effective evidence-based messages that appeal to all audiences. Giancoli is a graduate of UCLA, where she also earned her Master of Public Health in Community Nutrition.