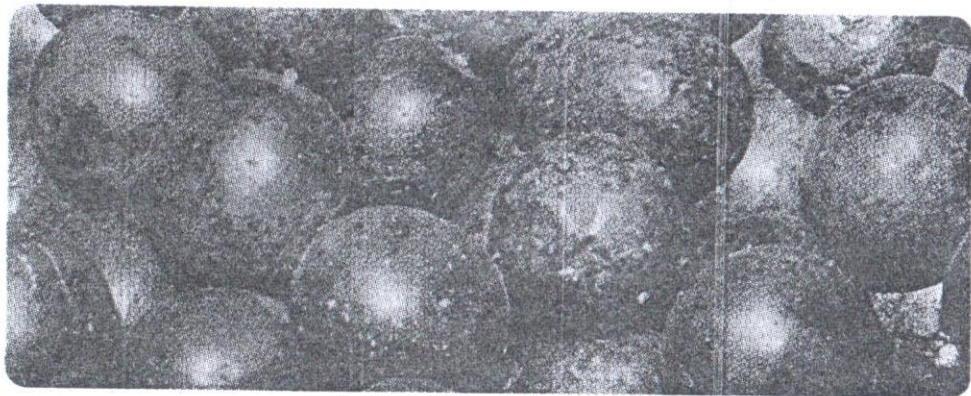


Going easy on the avocado will preserve your decency



GOOD LIVING

BY SOLOMON KARANJA

A student in Mexico City who decided to follow a diet of nothing but avocado to test its nutritional value approached the owner of the house he was staying in and requested for a month's supply of the fruits.

"If that is your wish, then you may leave my house. My daughters and I are very decent and we can't risk our reputation by having you here eating so much avocado," the landlady retorted.

Although the lady was not a nutritionist she had a clear idea of the effects of too much avocado. Arteries help smooth out the flow of blood by dampening the spurts from the heartbeats by alternately contracting and expanding.

The most common disease of arteries is

arteriosclerosis — the hardening of inner walls by age and deposits of fatty material and calcium, making them brittle and narrow. This interferes with blood flow and can cause a clot (thrombus), which can completely block the artery unless dissolved or removed. Mortality rates are high due to these blockages in the heart (heart attack) or brain (stroke). Diet and habits are big contributors to occurrence of arterial diseases. Tobacco causes arterial constriction and people with high cholesterol levels — smokers and the aged — are a high-risk group. About 12-15 per cent of the affluent over 50 years of age have the disease.

Alcohol, stimulant beverages, animal proteins, saturated fats, eggs, salt and sodium should be consumed gingerly.

Coronary artery disease is the leading cause of death in the US.

It is recommended for patients to receive periodic counselling on dietary intake of fats and cholesterol. The primary objective is to reduce fat consumption to less than 30 per cent of total calories and dietary cholesterol to less than 300mg/day.

After three months, further restrict intake of fats to seven per cent of the total calories and dietary cholesterol to 200mg/day.

Substances beneficial to arteries are anti-oxidants (found in vegetables and fruits and vitamins), soluble fibre and unsaturated fats.

Nuts, garlic and folates are also necessary in preserving the condition of arteries.

Yams and other tubers, rich in carbohydrates with moderate amounts of vitamin C and B, have a steroid that prevents conversion of blood lipids and lowers fats. They are rich in potassium, making them appropriate in preventing arterial diseases. Pumpkins have low fats and sodium, both causes of heart and artery problems. They are low in carbohydrate and protein but rich in carotenoids and potassium. Their anti-cancer properties make them a must for those at risk of, and those already diagnosed with, cancer. Their high fibre content makes them ideal for diabetic diets. Those on pumpkin diets have a lower risk of eye cataracts.

Guavas, which have high vitamin C content, are good for those who wish to stop smoking or are on treatment for nicotine addiction. Avocados lower cholesterol and fight anaemia. They are eaten in salads or spread on bread. They contain more vitamin E (for reproduction) than any fresh fruit. Their vitamins B relieves nervousness, irritability and depression. They are beneficial to diabetics and are invigorating. The avocado is an aphrodisiac.

Now you understand why the lady and her two daughters threw out the cheeky student.