

A Review of Fatty Acid Components in Avocado

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Abstract:

Avocado is one of the world's most economically significant tropical fruit crops. In recent years, there has been a lot of interest in avocado as a natural functional food in due to its excellent nutritional value and several health advantages. Avocados are rich in unsaturated fatty acids, fat-soluble vitamins like vitamin E and vitamin B6, alpha-carotene, sterols, fiber, protein, magnesium and potassium. Fatty acids play crucial structural and functional roles in biological systems and are a significant source of energy. The essential polyunsaturated fatty acids such as linoleic acid and the α -linolenic acid cannot be synthesized by human body hence must be obtained from food. This study reviewed the fatty acid composition of avocado. Peer-reviewed articles were retrieved from Scopus, Science Direct, SciFinder and Google Scholar. The most common fatty acids were determined to be oleic, linoleic, palmitic, palmitoleic, stearic and linolenic, myristic, arachidic, behenic, eicosenoic, myristoleic and tetraeicosanoic acid. The predominant fatty acids were oleic, palmitoleic, linoleic, linolenic, palmitoleic and arachidic acid, occurring in concentration ranges of 10.88-74.32, 7.70-55, 5.25- 38.2, 0.03-24.17, 0.16-19.78, 0.45-18.55 and 0.07-10.95% respectively. Hass, Quintal, Fortuna and Margarida avocado cultivars were found to contain docosahexaenoic acid, an omega-3 amino acid which is mainly obtained from fish. The type of fatty acids and their percentage composition in the avocados differed depending on the cultivar, plant part, ripening stage, geographical location and sample processing method. Results from this study have confirmed that avocado is a rich source of essential fatty acid. Further research on methods of enhancing fatty acid content is necessary. It is also necessary to determine the bioactivities of the fatty acids present in avocado.

Keywords: Avocado; Fatty acids; Composition; Cultivars

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I. Introducción

For ages, humans have relied on plants for their basic needs, including for food and medicine¹⁻⁹. Plants offer a genuine substitute for primary healthcare services in under developed nations in sub-Saharan Africa¹⁰⁻¹³. The potential of plants extracts in managing infections and pests has been demonstrated in previous studies¹⁴⁻²⁵. Plants are known to produce important secondary metabolites which are toxic to infectious pathogens²⁶⁻³². The search for natural substitutes for the synthetic chemicals frequently employed in the food, pharmaceutical, and cosmetic industries has gained momentum in recent years³³⁻³⁹. Plant extracts are preferred for the control of diseases since they are non-toxic to non-targeted organisms and are benign to the environment. In addition, the likelihood of harmful germs acquiring resistance to botanical medicines is extremely low⁴⁰.

Avocado is one of the most economically important fruit crop in the world⁴¹. The fruit has generated great interest in recent years as a natural functional food due to its high nutritional value and health benefits⁴²⁻⁴³. Avocado has a high nutritional value with a high content of unsaturated fatty acids, fat soluble vitamins such as vitamin E, vitamin B6, β -carotene, sterols, fiber, protein, magnesium and potassium⁴⁴⁻⁴⁵. Its oil has significant levels of omega-6 and omega-9 fatty acids as well as natural antioxidants that provide health benefits, reducing levels of total cholesterol, triacylglycerol, and LDL-cholesterol, preserving high-density lipoprotein plasma HDL-cholesterol⁴⁶⁻⁴⁹. The high amount of digestible oil and low sugar content makes avocado a rich source of energy and an essential component of diabetics' diets⁵⁰. Health benefits from the consumption of fruit encompass preventing and managing diet related diseases such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, high adiposity accumulation, chronic low-grade systemic inflammation, dyslipidemia, hypertension, obesity and cancer⁵¹⁻⁵⁸. The high non-saturated content of avocado fruit lipids provide superior skin permeability and sun screen performance⁵⁹⁻⁶⁰. Avocado extracts have shown biological activities including antibacterial, antioxidant and antiviral⁶¹⁻⁶⁵.

II. Fatty Acids From Avocado

Fatty acids play crucial structural and functional roles in biological systems and are a significant source of energy. They are critical for mammalian cells in order to perform various biological functions, such as sustaining the structural integrity of cellular membranes and serving as signaling molecules⁶⁶⁻⁶⁷. The human body can synthesize many of these fatty acids, except essential polyunsaturated fatty acids (PUFAs): linoleic acid (LA) and the α -linolenic acid (ALA). The human body cannot make these essential fatty acids from scratch but must get them from food⁶⁸. Alpha-linolenic acid (ALA) is found in vegetable oils and nuts (especially walnuts), flax seeds and flaxseed oil, leafy vegetables, and some animal fat, especially in grass-fed animals. Once ingested, short chain PUFAs are converted to long-chain fatty acids. Linoleic acid is the precursor of other omega-6 fatty acids whereas α -linolenic acid is the precursor of other omega-3 fatty acids⁶⁶⁻⁶⁷. The two main omega-3 fatty acids namely eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA) and docosahexaenoic acid (DHA) mainly come from fish and are sometimes referred to as marine omega-3s.

Several researchers have studied the fatty acid composition of various avocado cultivars which has led to identification of saturated, monosaturated and polysaturated fatty acids (Table 1). The saturated fatty acids include myristic (C14:0), palmitic (C16:0), stearic (C18:0), arachidic (C20:0), behenic (22:0) and tetraeicosanoic acid (24:0). The monosaturated fatty acids include myristoleic (C14:1), palmitoleic (C16:1), Oleic (C18:1), eicosenoic (C20:1) and docosenoic (22:1), while the polyunsaturated ones include linoleic (18:2), linolenic (18:3n-3), linolenic (18:3n-6), ecosadienoic (C20:2) and docosahexaenoic acid (22:6n-3). The biological activities of some of the fatty acids have been investigated (Table 1). Fatty acids profile in avocado vary with cultivar, plant part, stage of ripening, geographical location and sample processing methods (Table 2)⁶⁹⁻⁷⁴.

III. Effect of Cultivar

In a study of fatty acid content of three cultivars namely *Hass*, *Breda* and *Margarida*, oleic acid was found to be the major component (50-60%) followed by palmitic acid (21-25%), linoleic acid (12-21%), palmitoleic acid (2-11%), linolenic acid (0.09-0.63%) and stearic acid (0.09-0.17%)⁸⁸. The *Breda* cultivar had the highest content of oleic acid, followed by *Hass* and *Margarida*; while *Margarida* had the highest content of palmitic acid followed by *Hass* and *Breda*⁸. In another study, fatty acid composition of oils from four avocado cultivars namely *Quintal*, *Fortuna*, *Margarida* and *Hass* the major fatty acids were found to be oleic acid (18:1n-9), palmitic acid(16:0), palmitoleic acid (16:1), linoleic acid (18:2n-6), and alpha-linolenic acid (18:3n-3). In the pulps of *Quintal*, *Fortuna* and *Margarida* cultivars, oleic acid was the main fatty acid while in the *Hass* cultivar the main fatty acid was palmitic acid⁸⁹. The concentration of oleic acid was highest in *Quintal* followed by *Fortuna*, *Margarida* and *Hass* while the concentration of linolenic was highest in *Quintal* and *Margarida*, followed by *Fortuna* and *Hass*⁸⁹. Six fatty acids were detected in creole avocados from Nuevo Leon, Mexico namely palmitic, stearic, oleic, palmitoleic, linoleic and linolenic. The results showed that samples with high oleic acid content gave low palmitic and palmitoleic acid contents⁹⁰. In a study the saturated fatty acid (SFA) of the pulp oils accounted for around 22.3, 29.4, and 41.3% of the total fatty acids in the *Fortuna*, *Collinson* and *Barker* cultivars, respectively, indicating better quality of pulp oil of *Fortuna* and *Collinson* cultivars than that of the *Barker* cultivar⁹¹. Investigation of the seeds of 16 avocado accessions collected from southern China showed significant differences among the accessions. Seventeen fatty acids were identified which included linoleic (40.14%), palmitic (23.54%), and oleic acids (16.23%) The total contents of unsaturated fatty acids in all the seeds were higher than those of saturated fatty acids⁹². In another study⁹³, fatty acid composition of three Indonesian avocado oils, namely *Bantul* (MAB), *Purwokerto* (MAP) and *Garut* (MAG) was determined. The main components were oleic (C18:1), palmitic (C16:0), linoleic (C18:2) and palmitoleic acids (C16:1). The oils had high amounts of total unsaturated fatty acids, 55.73, 62.84 and 68.94% for MAB, MAP and MAG respectively while level of saturated fatty acids were MAB (33.21%), MAP (30.50%) and MAG (27.01%)⁹³. Fatty acid composition of three Indonesian avocado cultivars: *Merah bundar*, *Ijo bundar* and *Ijo panjang* together with imported *Fuerte* and *Shepard* cultivars were determined and all the oils contained palmitic, palmitoleic, stearic, oleic, linoleic and linolenic acids⁹³. *Merah bundar* oil contained oleic (43.44%), palmitic (28.45%), linoleic (16.27%) and palmitoleic (9.81%). The *Fuerte* avocado oil contained oleic acid (55.64%), palmitic (22.13%), linoleic (14.18%) and palmitoleic (6.11%)⁹⁴. In *Ettinger*, *Fuerte*, *Hass* and *Reed* avocados from Morocco, the predominant fatty acids were oleic acid palmitic and linoleic acid occurring in different proportions depending on the cultivar The *Reed* avocado had the highest concentration of oleic acid (61.18%), followed by *Fuerte* 57.5% while the *Hass* recorded the lowest amount (54.53%). *Ettinger* gave the highest proportion (84.04%) of unsaturated fatty⁹⁵.

IV. Effect of Maturity Stage

The percentage oleic acid varied between 61.1-59.4%, 55.9-45.3% and 53.3-49.2% in *Breda*, *Margarida* and *Hass* avocados respectively, during a storage period of 22 days while palmitic acid composition varied between 27.0-23.0%, 23.2-19.9% and 22.1-19.3% in *Margarida*, *Breda* and *Hass* respectively⁸⁸. In *Hass* avocados, a significant increase in monounsaturated and saturated fatty acids contents was observed during avocado ripening, while the polyunsaturated fatty acid content decreased⁴⁶. In another study palmitoleic acid content increased significantly with the maturity stage of the avocados for all of the sapling locations⁹⁶. In a study involving *Fuerte* and *Hass* cultivars oleic acid significantly increased with late harvest while other fatty acids decreased⁹⁷. Statistically significant differences in the fatty acid compositions during the post-harvest ripening period was also recorded⁹⁷. A study was conducted to determine the effect of postharvest ripening strategies based on high temperature (15 and 20 °C) and external ethylene (0 or 100 ppm applied for 24 h). The application of high temperature or ethylene did not have a significant effect on the fatty acid profile or composition and total amount of oil recovered at edible ripeness⁹⁸. However the composition was affected by stage of maturity⁹⁹.

V. Effect of Region of Production

A study conducted to determine the relationship between fatty acid content and the altitude of orchards of avocados found that the quantities of oleic acid decreased drastically at lower altitudes, while the amounts of palmitoleic and linoleic acids increased. The oleic/palmitoleic, linoleic/palmitoleic, and oleic/linoleic indexes increased significantly at higher altitudes⁹⁶. The fatty acid composition *Fuerte* avocado grown in different regions were found to differ significantly^{70, 71, 97}. *Fuerte* avocado oil from Indonesia contained oleic, palmitic, linoleic and palmitoleic acids in concentrations of 55.64, 22.13, 14.18 and 6.11% respectively⁹⁴ while in *Fuerte* from Morocco the most abundant fatty acid was oleic acid (57.5%) followed by linoleic (19.84%) and palmitic (15.63%)⁹⁵. Fatty acid profile and composition of *Hass* avocado has also been found to vary with geographical location of cultivation¹⁰⁰⁻¹⁰¹.

VI. Effect of Plant Part

In a study it was found that pulp oil of avocado had higher percent of stearic, oleic and linoleic acids than seed oil, while the seed oil had higher amount of palmitic, arachidic, eicosenoic and ecosadienoic acids than the pulp oil⁶². Myristic and palmitic acids were detected in the pulp oil but were missing in the seed oil⁶². Pulp oil from *Hass* and *Margarida* avocados were found to contain the highest concentrations of 14:0, 16:0, 16:1, 18:0, 18:1n-9, 18:2n-6, 20:0, 18:3n-3, 20:1, 22:0, 24:0 and 22:6n-3 fatty acids followed by the peel and seed oils⁸⁹. The ratios of PUFA/SFA from *Hass* avocado were found to be 0.530, 0.860 and 1.340 in pulp, peel and seed oil respectively⁸⁹. Pulp oil from *Quintal* avocado contained the highest concentrations 14:0, 16:0, 16:1, 18:0, 18:1n-9, 18:2n-6 and 20:0 fatty acids followed by the peel and seed oils while the seed oil of *Quintal* avocado had the highest concentrations of 18:3n-6 and 22:1 acids. The ratios of PUFA/SFA were 0.4000, 0.6200 and 1.990 in pulp, peel and seed oils respectively⁸⁹. For the *Fortuna* cultivar, pulp oil contained the highest amounts of 14:0, 16:0, 16:1, 18:0, 18:1n-9, 18:2n-6, 20:0, 18:3n-3 and 22:6n-3 fatty acids while the peel oil contained the highest amounts of 22:0 and 24:0 fatty acids. The 22:1 fatty acid was found in seed oils of all the four cultivars; but was missing in pulp and peel oils⁸⁹. In a study by Galvão *et al.* saturated fatty acid (SFA) accounted for 22.3, 29.4, and 41.3% of the total fatty acids in pulp oils of *Fortuna*, *Collinson* and *Barker* avocados respectively, indicating better quality of pulp oil of *Fortuna* and *Collinson* avocados⁹¹. However, monounsaturated fatty acid content of the peel oils from the three cultivars were not significantly different⁹¹.

VII. Conclusion

The most common fatty acids in avocado are oleic, linoleic, palmitic, palmitoleic, stearic, linolenic, myristic, arachidic, behenic, eicosenoic, myristoleic and tetraeicosanoic acid, which were detected in 115, 115, 114, 113, 108, 108, 51, 49, 39, 36, 23 and 21 avocado samples respectively out of the 116 samples whose reports were accessed (Table 3). The major ones were oleic, palmitoleic, linoleic, linolenic, palmitoleic and arachidic acids which were found at concentrations of 10.88-74.32, 7.70-55, 5.25- 38.2, 0.03-24.17, 0.16-19.78, 0.45-18.55 and 0.07-10.95% respectively. These findings are in agreement with previous reports which found oleic acid to be the most abundant fatty acid in most cultivars^{42, 49, 62}.

The findings from this report have confirmed that avocado is a rich source of fatty acids including the essential polyunsaturated fatty acids such as linoleic acid (LA) and the α -linolenic acid (ALA) which humans must obtain from food to enable then synthesize other omega-6 and omega-3 fatty acids, respectively. *Hass*, *Quintal*, *Fortuna* and *Margarida* avocado avocados were found to contain docosahexaenoic acid (DHA), an omega-3s which is known to be mainly obtained from fish⁸⁹. Further research on methods of enhancing fatty acid content is necessary. It is also necessary to determine the bioactivities of the fatty acids present in avocado.

Table 1. Some Fatty Acids from Avocado and their Bioactivities


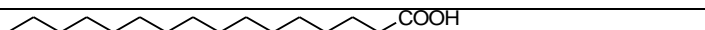
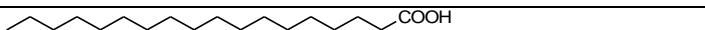
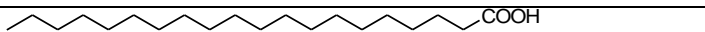
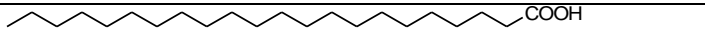
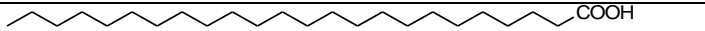
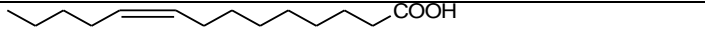

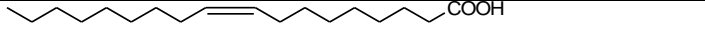
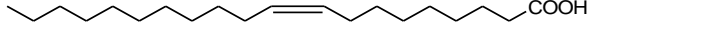
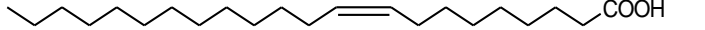
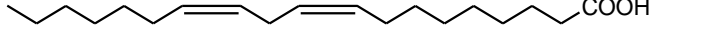
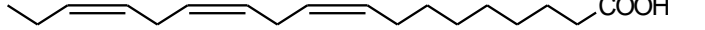
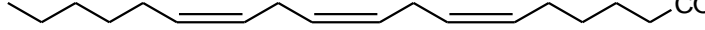
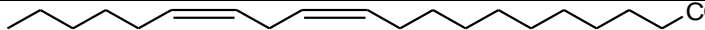
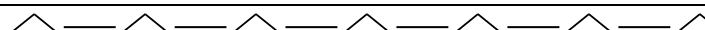
Fatty Acids	Structure	Biological activities
Myristic (C14:0)		Antimicrobial ⁷⁵⁻⁷⁶ Antioxidant ⁷⁷
Palmitic (C16:0)		Antimicrobial ⁷⁵ Antioxidant ⁷⁵⁻⁷⁸
Stearic (C18:0)		Antimicrobial ^{75,79-80}
Arachidic (C20:0)		Antimicrobial ⁸¹⁻⁸² Antioxidant ⁸³
Behenic (22:0)		
<i>n</i> -Tetraeicosanoic acid (24:0)		
Myristoleic (C14:1)		
Palmitoleic (C16:1)		Antioxidant ⁷⁸
Oleic (C18:1)		Antimicrobial ⁸⁴⁻⁷⁵
Eicosenoic (C20:1)		
Docosenoic (22:1)		
Linoleic (18:2)		Antimicrobial ⁸⁴⁻⁷⁵
Linolenic (18:3n-3)		Antimicrobial ⁸⁴
Linolenic (18:3n-6)		
Ecosadienoic (C20:2)		
Docosahexaenoic acid (22:6n-3)		Anti-inflammatory ⁸⁵ Antimicrobial ⁸⁶⁻⁸⁷

Table 2. Fatty Acid Composition of Different Avocado Varieties from Different Locations

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