

# Engaging Nutrition Experts on the Nutrition Benefits of California Avocados: A Review of 2013 Activities

Consumer perception about the nutrition benefits of avocados has changed significantly in recent years. According to an avocado tracking study conducted by Cooper Roberts Research in 1999, about one third of avocado users perceived avocado fat content to be a barrier to purchase. In a spring 2013 tracking study by the same organization only 13 percent reported the same concern. In fact nearly 75 percent of avocado users now claim “good for you” as a reason to buy avocados, compared to only about 57 percent in 1999. These changes in perception are due in part to nutrition communications from the California Avocado Commission and other avocado marketing associations, according to the study.

The commission has been sharing avocado nutrition information with consumers for more than 30 years, with the “*Would this body lie to you?*” campaign featuring the famous Angie Dickenson in the 1970s kicking off the effort. CAC continues to promote the nutritional benefits of California avocados to consumers directly through its outreach efforts and by educating and engaging with key nutrition stakeholders and nutrition professionals. The commission’s nutrition professional outreach program provides information to educate influencers in the healthcare industry about the nutritional benefits of the fruit, so that they in turn can spread the word to their patients and customers.

These nutrition influencers include healthcare professionals, registered dietitians (RDs) and supermarket RDs (SRDs) - who are employed by retailers. Additionally, CAC continues its partnerships with high-profile and media-savvy RDs as “Ambassadors” to help communicate the nutrition profile of California avocados as part of a healthful diet. Commission RD Ambassadors include: Michelle Dudash (Bashas), RD; Katie Ferraro, MPH, RD, CDE; Janice Newell Bissex, MS, RD; Liz Weiss, MS, RD; and Bonnie Taub-Dix, MA, RD, CDN.

CAC furthers the reach of its nutrition efforts through its ongoing partnerships with and support of prominent non-profit nutrition organizations including the Produce for Better Health Foundation, Mediterranean Foods Alliance and Oldways.



*RD Ambassador Michelle Dudash prepares for a rush of SRDs, anxious to try their hand at the “Cut, Nick and Peel” technique.*

## 2013 Engagement Opportunities

### ***Food and Nutrition Conference Exposure***

Building upon ongoing outreach efforts to SRDs, the commission served as a sponsor of the 2013 Oldways Supermarket Dietitian Leadership Symposium, which ran from February 29 - March 2 in Savannah, GA. The Symposium attracted 85 of the nation’s top dietitians, food experts and industry leaders, including 45 SRDs from many of CAC’s top target retail customers.

As part of the commission's sponsorship, one of its RD Ambassadors, Michelle Dudash, hosted a California avocado nutrition presentation and demonstration. The SRDs in attendance were receptive and responsive to the information and materials she provided and she invited some of the SRDs to try their hand at the "Cut, Nick and Peel" avocado preparation technique during a CAC-sponsored break activity. More than 50 guests participated in the activity and then enjoyed a fresh California avocado as a light snack.

In support of the "Wake up to Breakfast with California Avocados" 2013 marketing initiative, the commission provided the symposium caterer with CAC's recipe for Frittata with Avocado, Roasted Red Peppers, Olives and Feta, which was served on the last day of the Symposium.

CAC was also a sponsor of the California Dietetic Association's (CDA) Annual Meeting and Exhibit from April 11 – 13 in Santa Clara, CA, which drew more than 700 RDs from across the state. CAC engaged with attendees one-on-one during the exposition and demonstrated how to select and cut ripe California avocados; provided recipes, nutrition handouts and *Get the Scoop* nutrition brochures; and distributed approximately 600 *Garden Fresh Tomato* and *California Avocado Salsa* samples on April 12. In addition, CDA members were served *Bruschetta with California Avocado and Basil* as part of a sponsored luncheon on Saturday, April 13. The commission also collected feedback from attendees about their consumption of California avocados and information about California avocado usage ideas that they recommend to their patients and clients. Responses will help shape future resources provided to nutrition professionals.



Attendees enjoyed samples of *Garden Fresh Tomato* and *California Avocado* from the Commission Booth, proclaimed as "Best in Show" by some.

## The Value of Third-Party Spokespeople

The California Avocado Commission utilizes a variety of third-party spokespeople such as bloggers, registered dietitians and chefs, to help promote the culinary versatility and nutritional benefits of California avocados. CAC is able to leverage the credibility of independent spokespeople as trusted resources to help educate consumers about the delicious and nutritious fruit.

Bloggers continue to be major influencers of their followers and help motivate their grocery shopping purchases by inspiring them with tantalizing recipes. To capitalize on this, the commission has partnered with six well-known food bloggers through its blogger ambassador program. These key bloggers create rich content around California avocados, including the development of new avocado-centric recipes. They consistently deliver key messages to consumers and support CAC's overall marketing efforts.

The commission continues to promote the nutritional attributes of avocados with key media-savvy registered dietitians, as part of its RD ambassador program. These well-credentialed nutrition experts regularly appear in the media and seamlessly integrate key messages about California avocados into their press interviews, direct consumer engagement and through their various print, online and social media communications channels.

To inspire consumers with new culinary applications for California avocados, CAC has developed long-standing relationships with both well-known and up-and-coming chefs to help increase demand, build California avocado awareness and boost coverage in target markets throughout the season. The commission's 14 partner chefs promote the fruit through in-restaurant promotions, media activities, social media promotion and event appearances. Their culinary credibility with consumers, along with the creativity shown in the dishes they create with California avocados is key to driving consumer interest in the fruit. 🥑





Michelle Dudash, RD



Katie Ferraro, MPH, RD, CDE



"Meal Makeover Moms"  
Janice Newell Bissex, MS, RD  
Liz Weiss, MS, RD



Bonnie Taub-Dix, MA, RD, CDN

### Online and Social Media Engagement

In addition to traditional media opportunities, CAC works with its four media-influential RD "Ambassadors" on various social and online activities.

The CaliforniaAvocado.com nutrition section receives more than 800,000 visits annually. To keep content fresh and encourage return visits, the commission works with RDs to develop California avocado-centric recipes and preparation ideas.

On social media, CAC featured registered dietitian Bonnie Taub-Dix as one of three Facebook chat experts during the 2013 season kick off in early April. Bonnie engaged with fans over the course of an hour long chat session answering their specific questions about California avocados, nutrition and diet – continuing to field questions several days after. After the chat, fans thanked the commission for including Bonnie, with comments like "A lot of great info in such a short amount of time. Looking forward to the next chat for more recipe ideas."

### Retail

Avocado nutrition information is incorporated into CAC's retail and foodservice marketing as well. The commission regularly includes nutrition information on point-of-sales materials including recipe cards and booklets, as well as display cards. More than 200,000 recipe booklets for retail use that include California avocado nutrition messages have been printed for distribution in 2013. Nutrition information is also provided to retailers for their publications, websites and blogs, cooking classes, handouts and other activities. 🥑



### Our nutrition experts have a variety of credentials. Here's a breakdown of what they all mean:

CDE	Certified Diabetes Educator
CDN	Certified Dietitian-Nutritionist (state-specific licensure)
MA	Master of Arts
MPH	Master of Public Health
MS	Master of Science
RD	Registered Dietitian