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A bilingual magazine

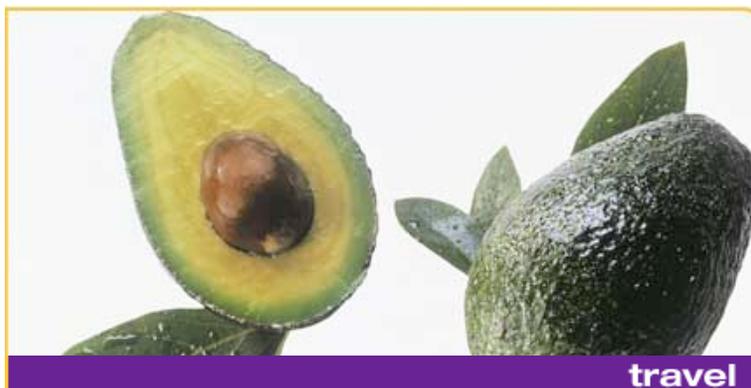
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Hail the Humble Avocado

Guacamole, avocado ice cream, music, and family come together at the annual California Avocado Festival.

BY MARYANN HAMMERS
September 2008

Angelina Garcia and her daughter, Patricia, soon will be chopping avocados, cutting tomatoes, and dicing chilies. The mother-daughter duo is whipping up a new version of their famous guacamole for the recipe contest at the [22nd Annual California Avocado Festival](#), scheduled for October 3-5 in Carpinteria, a small California beach town.

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In previous years, the two entered the contest as friendly competitors. Angelina often took first prize, while Patricia was a runner-up. But two years ago, Angelina was diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease. Although she now needs some assistance, she wouldn't dream of missing the festival or the Best Guacamole Contest, so this year mother and daughter will work as a team.

"My mom is still a fabulous cook," Patricia says. "So we're encouraging her, and she and I will enter and make guacamole together.

"Since the very beginning," she adds, "our family has gone to the festival every year. My mom really looks forward to attending. She will continue to go, as long as she is able to."

Not all community events inspire such loyalty, but Carpinteria is that kind of place, and the California Avocado Festival is just the sort

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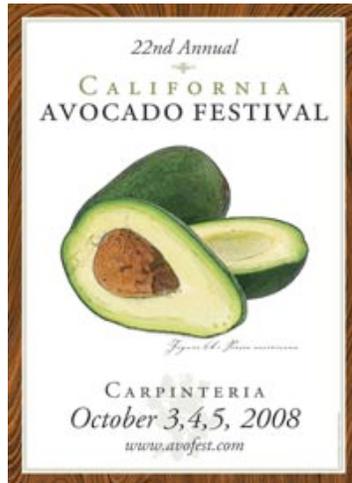
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of quirky event to bring everyone together.

One of California's largest street fairs, the nonprofit event benefits local churches, schools, boys and girls' clubs, and 40 other worthy causes. Last year more than 100,000 people turned out for the three-day happening, and organizers say 2008 promises to be even bigger and better, with more of nearly everything including exhibits, arts and crafts, entertainment, food—including avocado ice cream (don't knock it if you haven't tried it)—music on three stages, including live salsa and Latin Rock, and an avocado-shaped rock-climbing wall.



Everyone in the community gets involved. Farmers vie for who can grow the biggest, baddest avocado; last year's winner weighed in at over three pounds. Kids compete in a Best Dressed Avocado competition, so if you've never seen an avocado decked out in a sombrero now's your chance. And everyone can eat buttery, tasty, plump avocados to their heart's content—or buy a few, direct from the growers, to take home.

But why an avocado festival? And why Carpinteria, an agricultural community that often gets bypassed by travelers zooming up or down Highway 101 between Los Angeles and Santa Barbara? Well, not only does Carpinteria grow more than its share of avocados, but also the wholesome family event fits right in with the town's nostalgic small-town vibe.

“Carp”—as the town is called by locals—is the kind of laid-back beach community you thought didn't exist anymore. The local deli sells bait and tackle; everyone walks or bicycles to get around; the quaint one-street downtown is lined with antique shops, offbeat boutiques, an ice-cream parlor, and a handmade candy shop—and store owners are known to lock up early if the waves are good.

Most of the year the town's clean, mile-long family beach is the main attraction, thanks to its gentle waves, no undertow, and gently sloping soft sand (see it live on the [local beach cam](#)). It's perfect for sandcastle building, tide-pool exploring, and shell seeking. The scent of campfires pleasantly mingles with salty air, as Carpinteria State Beach abuts the shore with picnic tables, barbeques, big grassy fields, and overnight camping. And it's an easy scenic stroll along the bluffs to the Carpinteria Seal Sanctuary, a natural refuge where seals bask on rocks and bob in the sea.

THE GARCIA TEAM'S WINNING GUACAMOLE

When it comes to guacamole, Angelina Garcia of Carpinteria, two-time winner of the Best Guacamole Contest, is the queen of green. She and her daughter, Patricia, vow to be back in 2008. Here are their winning recipes from previous years:



[Angelina Garcia's Mexi Fest Guacamole](#)
[Angelina Garcia's Traditional Guacamole](#)
[Patricia Garcia's Black Bean Guacamole](#)

But on the first weekend in October, residents and visitors turn their back on the ocean—even if for just a few hours—and dance to salsa, eat guac, and hail the humble avocado.

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The **22nd Annual California Avocado Festival** takes place along Linden Avenue in Carpinteria from 4 to 9 p.m. on Friday, Oct. 3; 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. on Saturday, Oct. 4; and 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Sunday, Oct. 5. Admission is free. For more information, or to learn how to enter your own killer guacamole, visit avofest.com or call 805-684-0038.

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