

RICK BAYLESS

TV PERSONALITY | RESTAURATEUR

Most people know Rick Bayless from winning the title of Bravo's *Top Chef Masters*. His highly rated public television series, *Mexico: One Plate at a Time*, is broadcast coast-to-coast, and his nine cookbooks have earned multiple high-profile accolades.

Located in Chicago, Bayless' Frontera Grill and Topolobampo have each received the "Outstanding Restaurant of the Year" designation from the James Beard Foundation—an unprecedented feat for side-by-side restaurants. His wildly popular fast-casual Xoco debuted in 2009, and Tortas Frontera at Chicago's O'Hare airport has changed the face of airport dining. In 2016, he opened Frontera Cocina in Disney Springs. In 2018, Bayless expanded his Clark Street restaurants by opening Bar Sótano, a Oaxacan-inspired mezcal bar with modern Mexican bar food. Tortazo, Bayless' new fast-casual concept, debuted in 2020 in Chicago's iconic Willis Tower; he has plans to open an outpost in New York City in fall 2021.

In 2012 and again in 2014, Bayless joined forces with Lookingglass Theatre Company to create *Cascabel*, the story of food's capacity to change lives. *Cascabel's* audience shared a meal with the cast of actors, musicians, singers, and circus performers as the tale of unrequited love resolved into magical beauty.

Always a philanthropist, Bayless and his staff established the Frontera Farmer Foundation in 2003 to support small Midwestern farms. To date, the foundation has awarded nearly 200 grants totaling nearly \$3 million. He also launched the Frontera Scholarship, a culinary school scholarship for Mexican-American students in Chicago. In 2019, Bayless founded Impact Culinary Training, a restaurant job readiness program on the city's west side. And in 2017, he established the Bayless Family Foundation to support the city's vibrant theater scene with grants to Chicago theater companies totaling \$1.5 million to date.

The Government of Mexico has bestowed on Bayless the Mexican Order of the Aztec Eagle—the highest decoration bestowed on foreigners whose work has benefited Mexico and its people.

GUACAMOLE

3 medium soft avocados
(about 1¼ pounds total)

Salt

1 or 2 tablespoons fresh lime juice

¼–½ cup finely chopped onion

⅓–½ cup chopped ripe tomato

1–3 tablespoons very finely
chopped fresh green chiles

2–5 tablespoons chopped fresh cilantro

Remove the little "button" at the stem (pointy) end of each avocado. Cut around the pits, starting at the stem end, continuing to the blossom (bulbous) end, then coming back up to the stem end again. Twist the two halves apart, then remove the pits (either with a spoon or by wedging the knife blade into the pit and twisting to dislodge it). With a large spoon, scoop the flesh from the skin into a bowl. With an old-fashioned potato masher, a large fork, or the back of a large spoon, roughly mash the avocado. (For wonderful guacamole texture, I like to see distinctive pieces of unmashed avocado in the mix.)

Season with salt and lime juice: start with a scant teaspoon of salt and a tablespoon of lime, gently stir them in, then taste and continue adding salt and lime until the avocado tastes like the best avocado you've ever had. Avocados have very little natural sodium and no acid to speak of, so adding just the right amount of both flavors will "complete" the avocado' flavor.

Scoop the chopped onion into a strainer and rinse under cold water. Shake off the excess water, then add the minimum measurement to the bowl, along with the minimum measurement of tomato, chile, and cilantro. Stir everything gently together, then taste and add more until you achieve the perfect guacamole.

You're ready to scoop your guacamole into a bowl, garnish it with additional cilantro (or radishes or a little fresco cheese, among many choices), and serve it as a condiment for tacos or with tortilla chips or sliced vegetables as a dip.

Makes about 2½ cups.