

Orange avocado plant abuzz for Cinco de Mayo

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This time of year, **Prime Produce** in Orange is cranking.

I visited the avocado packing house a week before one of the industry's most profitable holidays: **Cinco de Mayo**. The celebration is the biggest guacamole-eating fest of the year.

Cinco de Mayo party-goers in the United States are expected to eat an estimated **53.9 million pounds** of avocados during their celebrations, according to the Irvine-based **California Avocado Commission**.



For packers, its peak season — especially in California, a high-demand exporter of Hass avocados.



As of April 25, California avocado suppliers packed about 10.2 million pounds of Hass avocados, up from 8.64 million two weeks ago.

Prime Produce has been so busy, it recently hired three extra workers to help pack and ship avocados to dozens of clients. About 75 percent of the packer's avocados are shipped to restaurants, food distributors and produce suppliers outside California, said Yair Crane, business development manager at Prime Produce. (shown, left)

A relative in Montreal, Canada recently spotted a Prime Produce avocado in a local market.

As Cinco de Mayo approaches, many clients step up orders for Hass – the favored variety used in most **guacamole recipes** because of its creamy texture and flavor, he said.

“Cinco de Mayo is such a big avocado holiday,” Crane said, as dozens of avocados rumble down a conveyor belt in his **Old Towne Orange** facility. “There’s a lot of packing going on.”

Consumption could be more than expected as many people might be celebrating the holiday several times over the weekend, not just Monday, he added.

If anyone understands how the industry works, it's the Cranes.

Avi Crane, Yair's father, has been in the avocado business since the 1970s. His family founded [Prime Produce](#) in late 2004, having struck a deal to operate in the Chapman University-owned building. The circa 1918 plant is the last-standing citrus packing house in Orange County.

Stepping into the plant is like walking back in time. Original, scuffed hardwood planks blanket the 80,000-square-foot factory floor. Large, sliding wood doors remain key passageways into various parts of the building.



The plant's old cold storage room remains intact, and is now used as the company's main office. (Don't worry. It's not chilly in there.)

Though Yair Crane loves the history of the plant, he's definitely got his eye on the future. He is in the process of turning Prime Produce into an organic certified packing house to meet a growing consumer demand for organic avocados. He's also teamed up with a local flower shop to sell and ship avocados to the public for a \$1 each.



The business, dubbed [Avocados of Orange](#), is at 145 N. Lemon St. in Orange. The shop sells and ships gift baskets and boxed avocados anywhere in the U.S. Online ordering will soon be available. Phone: 888-574-3233.