

Ugly produce can make beautiful dishes



By [Lori Corbin](#)

Tuesday, August 02, 2016 12:00AM

MAR VISTA (KABC) --

Chef Jill Davie has worked 11 years in the produce industry and is upset by how much is thrown out.

California grows 80 percent of our nation's produce, but much of it won't make it to your table. Farmers and grocers alike want to sell their best bounty.

"It's ridiculous how much food goes to waste. A lot of waste and unnecessary waste," Davie said.

It's estimated that 20 to 40 percent of our produce is wasted due to cosmetic imperfections yet Davie said there are so many dishes you can make that look and taste beautiful.

Starting with gazpacho.

"This is what you want to use for gazpacho. Don't use the class acts. Save those for the salad," said Davie.

Tomatoes that are slightly soft, blemished and marred work well here. Along with cucumber, red onion, garlic and such, whipped up in a bell jar with an immersion blender to be refrigerated or gifted.

A Romesco sauce can be made from not-so-pretty roasted carrots and red bell pepper, plus almonds, olive oil and spices.

"It's wonderful on asparagus, fish," she said. "I just like it on toasted bread."

Did you buy too many peaches? Blend them with sugar of choice if needed then freeze with a cinnamon stick as the holder.

Davie uses an old-fashioned crank to concoct both guacamole with over-ripe avocados or a tasty granita with past-prime fruit.

Beautiful, delicious and still nutritious - her market dollars have not gone to waste.

Consumers are increasingly aware of this challenge and are willing to buy blemished produce especially if there's a price break.

Whole Foods now offers "Imperfect Produce" in 11 California stores. Wal-Mart is selling "Spuglie" potatoes and "I'm Perfect" apples in about 400 locations.

An Instagram campaign known as ["Ugly Fruit and Veg"](#) has more than 30,000 followers.

Want to try this for yourself? Here are some recipes by Executive Chef Jill Davie who plans to open ['The Mar Vista'](#) in the fall.

Popsi Chulos

Yields 2

3 peaches (skin on, pitted)

1 T Muscovato sugar or agave

Cup of water (to help purée)

3.5 oz. pleated Solo cups

2 cinnamon sticks

Blend peaches, water and sugar until smooth in a blender. Pour into Solo cups. Insert cinnamon stick in center. Freeze and enjoy.

Guacamole

Yields 1 serving

1 Reed Avocado (they don't turn brown)

2 T chopped red onion

1 bunch cilantro

1 bunch mint

Lime juice to taste

Salt to taste

Mash avocado to a chunky consistency in a bowl, then add in lime juice, onion, cilantro and mint. Serve immediately.

Carrot Romesco

Yields 1 cup

1 roasted red pepper

8 roasted carrots (skin-on, top-on)

4 T olive oil

1 cup roasted, whole almonds

1 T smoked paprika

3 cloves peeled garlic

Salt to taste

Roast the red pepper on a stove top fire until charred. Peel, seed, and then dice. Toss carrots lightly in olive oil, then roast in oven. With a mortar and pestle, grind ingredients from smallest to largest, starting with the garlic, nuts, red pepper, and then carrots. Finish off with olive oil, salt, and paprika. Can also be made using a blender.

Summer Gazpacho

Yields 4 cups

1 cup chopped cucumber (skin on)

1 cup chopped summer squash zucchini

cup chopped red onion

2 cups chopped tomato

cup red wine vinegar

Salt to taste

Pepper to taste

Combine all ingredients in a blender until smooth. Add salt and pepper to taste