Guacamole is my love child—the product of my unlikely union with St. John's School. Tomatoes, Jalapeno Peppers, Onions, Cilantro, Avocados, Salt, and Limes not lemons meticulously chopped, mashed, squeezed or pinched into life with the stir of a metal spoon and combined in a distinctive ratio that can only be tasted, not measured. Utopia can exist in a bowl.

Guacamole making is a rare ritual, taking place two to three times a year. The ritual began October 23rd, 2008, a day commemorating Avagadro's number, 6.022 X 10^{23}, commonly referred to as a "mole" in chemistry. Avagadro, Avocado; mole, GuacaMOLE. With puns foreshadowing my destiny, my compulsive chemistry teacher invited the class to bring or prepare food for the Mole Day lunch time celebration. As the only Hispanic student in my class, I felt obliged to deliver authentic Mexican guacamole. Naturally, I asked my mom, a chef by profession, for a recipe. I modified it slightly, making it my own as I progressed, accommodating the recipe to my conception of my classmates' palettes, ensuring that their tongues would remain well and intact despite the abundance of jalapeño peppers.

Sometimes, while chopping plum tomatoes into bite-sized squares, I recall life before this ritual began. Originating from a public middle school whose main architectural feature were "temporary" trailer-like buildings, when I annexed myself to the affluent K-12 St. John's School as a new freshman student, I was dismayed to discover that I would undertake the adventure of private schooling in a place paradoxically plagued with scarcity—scarcity of Hispanic students. My classmates were plum tomatoes, and I was a Roma tomato—a tomato nonetheless, as tasty and good as the rest, yet starkly out of place. I was convinced I belonged in a different recipe.

I move on to dice onions: using a blade to disrupt the onion's abutting but separate sulfenic acid and catalytic compartments, I am annoyed when the onion generates volatile vapors that stimulate the release of involuntary tears from my unsuspecting eyes. I understand the chemistry behind those tears, but am shocked by the tears that come after the first week of classes at my new school. Like a blade through an onion, the force of a scholarship had torn the barrier between this new world of intellectual opportunity and me; but instead of reveling in the opportunity, I cried, not tears of joy.
I was cilantro, not parsley—a main ingredient in Mexican, not Italian dishes; I was the less “refined” of the two—simply put, I wasn’t rich. Who would have thought that tailoring my school uniform skirt would cost more than the skirt itself? Before I came to St. John’s School, I had never given money significant consideration—never realized the immensity of my mother’s Herculean task of supporting four children on her own. Momentarily angry after my mom decided I would not have my uniform tailored, I was overcome with guilt.

In the midst of my never ending agony, my English teacher, the only African American teacher in the Upper School, suggested I join FACETS, a diversity club, soon after I had joined Hispanic Affinity Group. I was now a jalapeño pepper almost ready to be diced. Almost.

Before I chop the jalapeño peppers, I first cut them open to remove most of the seeds inside—the source of the overwhelming spice. Through a FACETS sponsored Student Diversity Leadership Conference, I was able to examine myself and my beliefs, expelling my self imposed label of “outsider” like a jalapeño seed. Like salt adds another layer of taste to guacamole, I learned that culture and socioeconomic status were layers of diversity, much like religion, age and gender, which made a community alike and different.

As I mash the avocados into a pasty yet gooey consistency, I take pride in avocado’s health benefits—before adding lime juice. Like avocados’ good fatty acids, the experience of attending St. John’s School has taught me so much. What I initially thought impossible became possible; I have learned to value my heritage, to celebrate diversity, and most importantly, how to share that with others.

This year as I share my creation, my classmates devour it instantly with salty restaurant style Tostitos chips like they will do twice a year since that day, demanding more each time. I see a plush guacamole toy in the room. What if I’d sewn one of those instead?

Coments via email: Great concept. I like the flow and the goals of this essay. I like the writing.
The tense shifts are a bit off. And the ending not so much there. Can you really think about the meaning of sharing a dish that combines metaphorical and real parts of you.
The ritual began October 23rd, 2008, a day commemorating Avagadro’s number, $6.022 \times 10^{23}$. Commonly referred to as a “mole” in chemistry. Avagadro, Avocado; mole, GuacaMOLE. With puns foreshadowing my destiny, my compulsive chemistry teacher invited the class to bring or prepare food for the Mole Day lunch time celebration. As the only Hispanic student in my class, I felt obliged to deliver authentic Mexican guacamole. Naturally, I asked my mom, a chef by profession, for a recipe. I modified it slightly, making it my own as I progressed, accommodating the recipe to my conception of my classmates’ palettes, ensuring that their tongues would remain well and intact despite the abundance of jalapeño peppers.

Sometimes, while chopping plum tomatoes into bite-sized squares, I recall life before this ritual began. Transferring from a public middle school whose main architectural feature were “temporary” trailer-like buildings, I enrolled in the affluent K-12 St. John’s School as a new freshman student. I was dismayed to discover that I would undertake the adventure of private schooling in a place paradoxically plagued with scarcity—scarcity of Hispanic students. My classmates were plum tomatoes and I was a Roma tomato—a tomato nonetheless, as tasty and good as the rest, yet starkly out of place. I was convinced I belonged in a different recipe.

I move on to dice onions; using a blade to disrupt the onion’s abutting but separate sulfenic acid and catalytic compartments, I am annoyed when the onion generates volatile vapors that stimulate the release of involuntary tears from my unsuspecting eyes. I understand the chemistry behind those tears but am shocked by the tears that come after the first week of classes at my new school. Like a blade through an onion, the force of a scholarship had torn apart the barrier between me and this new world of intellectual opportunity. However, instead of reveling in the opportunity, I cried.

I was cilantro, not parsley—a main ingredient in Mexican, not Italian dishes; I was the less “refined” of the two—simply put, I wasn’t rich. Who would have thought that tailoring my school uniform skirt would cost more than the skirt itself? Before I came to St. John’s School, I had never given money significant consideration—never realized the immensity of my mother’s Herculean task.
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Before I dice the jalapeño peppers, I first cut them open to remove most of the seeds inside—the source of the overwhelming spice. Through a FACETS sponsored Student Diversity Leadership Conference, I expelled my self imposed label as “outsider” like the needless jalapeño pepper seeds by examining myself and my beliefs. I learned that culture and socioeconomic status were layers of diversity, much like religion, age, and gender, which make a community both alike and different. I was like salt adding another layer of “taste” to its environment.

As I mash the avocados into a pasty yet gooey consistency, I take pride in avocado’s health benefits—before adding lime juice. Like avocados’ good fatty acids, the experience of attending St. John’s School provided me with so many benefits. What I initially thought impossible became possible: I learned to value my heritage, to celebrate diversity, and most importantly, how to share that with others.

I share my creation with my classmates, who devour it instantly with salty restaurant style Tostitos chips twice a year since mole day, demanding more each time. Initially they viewed you as what? You viewed yourself as what? Now how do they view you? How do you view yourself? Guacamole is my love child. Guacamole is utopia in a bowl, its components each contributing something to create a more perfect whole. These components—my experiences—have shaped the person I am today and, more importantly, have impacted my view of the person I want become.

Comments via email:

Comments. I’m not sure you need the first paragraph. Perhaps you launch into the second one. It moves faster that way. Then with the end...think of it as your love child...present, present, insider, outsider, etc.