Guac Talk

IndyCar driver Charlie Kimball fought to save his family’s avocado farm from destruction. Now he’s eager to rebuild—and spread the joys of eating his favorite food. By Jeremy Fuchs

It doesn’t matter how they’re prepared: Charlie Kimball loves avocados. He’ll eat them fried, or on toast, or frozen in ice cream. He’ll eat them with just some salt. There’s good reason. The 34-year-old IndyCar racer’s family has been farming avocados for six generations. The Kimballs operate more than 100 acres in Southern California. That’s around a million pounds of avocados!

Kimball didn’t grow up on the ranch, but he spent most summers there. It was on the farm—and with help from 4-H (an organization devoted to youth mentorship and development)—that his love of agriculture grew. And that love helped him when times for farmers in California got tough.

In 2017 the Thomas Fire hit large swaths of the state, destroying thousands of homes and countless acres of farmland. When Kimball and his wife flew out west to the farm, they saw a wave of fire coming over a hill, on a clear path to the ranch. Kimball and his family spent the night fighting the fire—nearly 65 percent of the farm was destroyed. Since then, though, they’ve replanted around 2,000 trees. It’ll take about five to 10 years to replant all 16,000 that were lost.

“We’re well on the road back to recovery,” says Kimball.

On the track, Kimball is looking forward to his second season on a new team. And, surely, he’ll have a few avocados to fuel him.