

# Kiwi

## Grow

Kiwi is a fruit that grows on a woody vine, *Actinidia deliciosa*. The vine's shoots are covered with reddish hairs. It can reach a length of 15-30 feet. The plant has large, heart shaped leaves that grow from 6-9 inches long and 8 inches wide.

Kiwi plants are dioecious, which means individual plants are either male or female. Only female plants bear fruit when pollinated by the flowers of a male plant. They are typically planted in orchards at a ratio of eight female plants to one male plant. From November to February, vines are dormant, chilled to below 45 degrees F. Each plant is pruned to help maintain production and help regulate next season's crop yield and fruit size. Growers bring bees into the orchard when the plant flowers are in bloom. The bees transfer pollen from the flowers of the male plants to female vines. After pollination, the fruit grows quickly for the first 60 days and then slows until harvest. Harvest begins in late September, with most of the fruit harvested during October and early November.

California produces 98% of the kiwifruit grown in the United States with approximately 8,000 acres devoted to production. In North Carolina, hardy kiwi, *A. arguta*, (sometimes called grape kiwi) can be grown.<sup>1-2</sup>

**Fun Fact:** The skin of kiwi is edible, delicious, and loaded with nutrients and fiber!<sup>3</sup>

## Choose

Did you know that there are more than 400 varieties of kiwi? Countries that grow kiwi are China, Italy, Chile, New Zealand and the United States. In the U.S., it is called kiwi. Other parts of the world call it kiwifruit. The most popular variety in the U.S. is Hayward.<sup>1-3</sup>

Kiwi is available year round. The size of the kiwi does not affect the taste. Instead, select firm, unblemished fruit. To test firmness, press the outside of the fruit with your thumb. If the kiwi gives to a little pressure, the kiwi is ripe. If it feels hard, it is not ready to eat.<sup>3-4</sup>



## Store

Store unripe kiwi at room temperature 3-5 days before serving or eating. Store ripe fruit in the coldest part of the refrigerator, 32-36 degrees F, 90-98% relative humidity. To prolong storage life, do not store near produce that produces ethylene, such as bananas, tomatoes, apples, melons, and pears. Ethylene is a gas that can cause produce to ripen more quickly.<sup>4</sup>

**Fun Fact:** Kiwifruit contains an enzyme that acts as a natural meat tenderizer. Simply cut the fruit in half and rub over the meat, or peel and mash the fruit then spread on the surface of the meat and let stand for 10-15 minutes or longer.<sup>1,3</sup>

## Use

### **Simply scoop and enjoy!**

Due to the kiwifruit's natural sweetness, it is typically eaten raw. Perhaps the most popular way to eat kiwi is to slice it in half and use a spoon to scoop out the fresh green fruit. Kiwi can be added to salads, parfaits, salsa, smoothies, waffles, pancakes, or cereal. Kiwifruit can also be enjoyed cooked. Grilling, baking, or making a cobbler or tart with the fruit are common ways to incorporate the kiwi into a main dish or dessert. Kiwis can also be made into jams, preserves, or syrup. Wash under clean, running water before eating, cutting, or cooking.<sup>4</sup>

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## Teach

### *What is the history of kiwifruit?*

Kiwifruit has been enjoyed by people for over 700 years. Originally, the fruit could be found growing in China where it was called Yang Toa (sunny peach). They were valued by the Kahn rulers because of their beautiful green color and decadent flavor.

New Zealand was the first country, outside of China, to start growing the fruit. Originally, the fruit was called Chinese gooseberries. In the 1960's, Americans began to receive shipments of Chinese gooseberries but changed the name to kiwifruit because of the resemblance to the fuzzy, brown kiwi bird - New Zealand's national bird.

In the 1980's, New Zealand developed a golden version of the kiwifruit. Unlike the traditional kiwifruit, this version is yellow on the inside and not fuzzy on the outside. Although the gold variety tastes like the traditional fruit, it also has a hint of mango flavor.<sup>1</sup>

**Fun Fact:** Kiwifruit is actually an edible berry from the Actinidia family.<sup>1</sup>

### **Class Activity - Kinds of Kiwi**

#### **Materials Needed:**

- Green and golden kiwi
- Spoons, paper plates and napkins

#### **Steps: \*Use food safety steps. Wash hands and produce.**

1. Discuss the history, growth, varieties, and nutritional benefits of kiwi as a class.
2. Provide a green and golden kiwi half to each student. Encourage them to try both the green and golden kiwi. They can scoop out the inside of the fruit to eat. Or they can eat the fruit with the skin.
3. Instruct students to compare and contrast the kiwis and note their observations.
4. Create a Venn diagram as a class of preferences for the green or golden kiwi or both.

**Fun Fact:** National Kiwifruit Day is celebrated on the first day of winter, traditionally December 21.<sup>1</sup>

## Eat

### **Kiwi—Quite a Nutrient Dense Fruit!**

One cup of kiwi has about 104 calories. It is cholesterol free and low in fat and sodium. Kiwi is an excellent source of vitamin C, providing 149% of the Daily Value. It is also a great source of vitamin K (60% DV) and copper (27% DV), and a good source of fiber (19% DV), vitamin E (16% DV), and folate (12% DV). It is also a source of lutein and zeaxanthin.<sup>4-6</sup>

**Fun Fact:** Kiwifruit has more Vitamin C than an orange and more potassium than a banana!<sup>3</sup>

Vitamin C helps our body absorb iron and folate from plants, protects us from infections and bruising, aids in healing, keeps our gums healthy, helps form collagen to hold muscles, bones and tissues together, and acts as an antioxidant to prevent cell damage. Vitamin K helps our body to clot blood and make proteins needed for our blood, bones and kidneys. Copper is part of many enzymes. It helps your body produce energy in cells, develop connective tissue, myelin and melanin, and make hemoglobin which is needed to carry oxygen in red blood cells. Insoluble fiber aids in digestion. Soluble fiber helps lower blood cholesterol. Vitamin E acts as an antioxidant, helping to protect cells from the damage caused by free radicals. Our bodies need folate for blood cell, DNA and genetic development. Lutein and zeaxanthin are carotenoids that may help maintain normal vision.<sup>7</sup>

## Find

For more kiwi info and resources, visit:

1. California Harvest of the Month, <https://harvestofthemonth.cdph.ca.gov>
2. North Carolina State Extension, [www.ces.ncsu.edu](http://www.ces.ncsu.edu)
3. Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, <https://dpi.wi.gov/school-nutrition/programs/fresh-fruit-vegetable>
4. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, [www.fns.usda.gov](http://www.fns.usda.gov)
5. Fruits & Veggies For Better Health, <https://fruitsandveggies.org/>
6. USDA FoodData Central, <https://fdc.nal.usda.gov/index.html>
7. Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, [www.eatright.org](http://www.eatright.org)