

## 2. A Slice of Kiwi History

- The kiwifruit is the edible fruit of the woody vine *Actinidia deliciosa* of the genus *Actinidia*.
- The history of the kiwi began in the Yangtse River valley in China, where it was called “Yang Tao.” The fruit Yang Tao was considered a delicacy by the court of the great Khans who cherished its delicious flavor and emerald-green color.
- The first seeds were brought out of China by missionaries to New Zealand at the turn of the 20th century.
- Those who tasted the fruit thought it had a gooseberry flavor and began to call it the “Chinese Gooseberry.”
- The fruit finally received its current name in 1959 when it was became a popular commercial product and an export company from New Zealand named it after the national bird, the kiwi.
- In North America, it is commonly known as “kiwi,” but it is marketed to the rest of the world as “kiwifruit.”
- There are 400 varieties of kiwis, but Hayward is the most popular variety in the United States.
- They soon became a popular backyard vine. Kiwi plants were first exported to the United States in 1904, but it wasn’t until the 1960s when kiwis gained popularity in domestic markets.

## 3. The Kiwi Bird

- The Kiwi bird lives only in New Zealand.
- Primarily a bird of New Zealand’s native forests, kiwis also



live in scrub and native grasslands. Because the kiwi is a semi-nocturnal, secretive bird, few New Zealanders have seen their national bird in the wild.

- A flightless bird about the size of a domestic fowl, the kiwi has coarse, bristly, hair-like feathers.
- Females are larger than males. Kiwis grow to about the size of a chicken and weigh between three and nine pounds.
- They have no tail and tiny two inch wings which for all practical purposes, are useless.
- Despite its awkward appearance, a kiwi can actually outrun a human and have managed to survive because of their alertness and their sharp, three-toed feet, which enable them to kick and slash an enemy.
- The kiwi’s long slender bill has nostrils at the lower end. Using its excellent sense of smell and flexible bill, the kiwi feeds on worms, insects and grubs, supplemented by leaves, berries and seeds.
- Today, New Zealanders overseas (and at home) are still invariably called “Kiwis”. The Kiwi is still closely associated with the Armed Forces. The New Zealand dollar is often referred to as the “The Kiwi” and the kiwi fruit is known as a “Kiwi” in some countries. Kiwis feature in the coat of arms, crests and badges of many New Zealand cities, clubs and organizations.



## 4 & 5. How Do Kiwis Grow?

- Kiwis grow on large, tender vines that can reach a height of 15 to 30 feet. The vine's shoots are thickly covered with reddish hairs and its large, heart-shaped leaves grow from six to nine inches long and up to eight inches wide. Due to the weakness of their vines, kiwis are commercially grown on sturdy support structures.
- From November to February, kiwi vines are dormant and must chill for about 600 to 850 hours at temperatures below 45 F. Vines are pruned during this time to help maintain production and regulate next season's crop yield and fruit size.
- Budbreak in California generally occurs in mid to late March, depending on the growing location and weather conditions. By the time shoots have grown four to six inches long, all parts of the flower have been formed. The flower parts continue to expand until bloom, which usually starts in May.
- Kiwi plants are dioecious, meaning individual plants are male or female. Only female plants bear fruit and only when pollinated by a male plant.
- They are typically planted in a vineyard at a ratio of about eight females to one male. Growers bring in bees during bloom so that the bees can move the pollen from the male to the female vines.
- Following pollination, the fruit grows rapidly for the first 60 days and then slows until harvest. In California, where growing season temperatures are typically warm, 90 to 105 F, and summer rainfall is nonexistent,

supplemental irrigation is necessary to achieve optimum kiwi growth and production.

- Peak water use on a hot summer day is about 10,000 gallons per acre.
- Harvest begins in late September, with the majority of fruit harvested during October and early November. The U.S. grows and harvests fruit in the late fall, October through November.
- Availability can occur from October through May with proper storage and handling.
- The New Zealand and Chile season is exactly the opposite. In these countries, kiwis are harvested in April and May. Yes, it is different due to the difference in seasons between the hemispheres where the countries are located.
- Kiwi plants prefer to hibernate in the winter months and bud in spring with growth of the berry occurring through the summer months. Therefore, kiwis are available year-round.

## 6. Reasons to Eat Kiwis

- A ½ cup of sliced kiwis is:
  - An excellent source of vitamin C\* and vitamin K.
  - A good source of fiber.
  - A source of potassium, folate, beta-carotene, lutein, and zeaxanthin.
  - One of the most nutrient-dense fruits.

## Vitamin C

- Vitamin C helps the body heal cuts and wounds and helps lower the risk of infection.
- It also helps keep the body from bruising and helps build the tissue that holds muscles and bones together.

- Vitamin C is also known as ascorbic acid and helps the body absorb the iron found in foods.
- It is only found in plants.
- Vitamin C is a powerful antioxidant. These nutrients help protect cells from damage that can increase your risk for certain diseases, such as cancer.
- Vitamin C strengthens your immune system. However, research has not shown that high doses of vitamin C can prevent or cure the common cold.

## Champions of Vitamin C include this list:

- Bell peppers
- Broccoli
- Citrus fruits
- Cantaloupe
- Cauliflower
- Kiwifruit
- Mustard greens
- Strawberries

## 7. How do you pick a good Kiwi?

- Select firm, unblemished fruit. The size of the fruit does not affect the taste.
- Press the outside of the fruit with your thumb. If it gives to a little pressure, the kiwi is ripe. If the kiwi feels hard, it's not ready to eat.
- Kiwis will keep for several days at room temperature and up to 4 weeks cooled.
- To ripen kiwis, place in a bag with an apple or a banana. Leave the bag out on the counter for a day or two.
- Be sure to wash your kiwi before serving as the skin may be eaten, just like an apple (show the students how you can eat the skin).

## Fun Fact:

Kiwifruit actually comes in two colors, green and gold. The green kiwi is the most popular. It has a fuzzy brown skin, bright green flesh with tiny black seeds and a white center. The gold kiwi is fairly new in the United States. It looks the same as the green kiwi on the outside except without the fuzz. The inside is golden yellow with tiny black seeds. It tastes similar to the green kiwi.

## Just the Facts

- Kiwis are one of the most nutrient-dense of all fruits.
- Kiwis grow on vines that can be as high as 30 feet.
- Kiwis are actually a berry.
- The skin of a kiwi is edible. Try eating it whole like an apple!
- Kiwis contain an enzyme that acts as a natural meat tenderizer. When meat is tender it is softer and easier to chew.
- Approximately 8,000 acres are devoted to the production of kiwis in the United States.