

KIWIFRUIT FROM NEW ZEALAND



As emeralds enhance the beauty of a woman, kiwifruit enhances almost any cuisine. Until recently, kiwifruit had been almost as scarce as emeralds, but now the lush New Zealand countryside is reveling in an abundance of orchards laden with this unique and enticing fruit.

In 1908, the "Chinese Gooseberry" was introduced from China to Wanganui, New Zealand. Over the years, the industry developed slowly and it wasn't until 1953 that the first fruit was exported to the United States under the name "Kiwifruit" in order to identify it with New Zealand instead of China. It grows in places with unlikely names such as Te Puke, Te Puna, Tauranga, Bay of Plenty and Poverty Bay. In just 7 short years since 1972, exports went from about 200 thousand flats to nearly 4 million! But this is still a long way from filling the increasing demand around the world.

Perhaps your first exposure to kiwifruit was in a fine restaurant either in a salad, on a buffet, in a dessert or as a very special sherbet or mousse. Whatever, the kiwifruit stands out in exquisite color and flavor. If, after that, you were to look for kiwifruit in your favorite market, you would probably pass it right by, never dreaming that fuzzy, egg shaped brown fruit concealed such a treat.

But just peel away the very thin skin and cut in crosswise slices and you'll find a dazzling, brilliant green fruit with a creamy colored center and tiny black edible seeds exploding out in a spectacular design. Rather an extravagant description, but one with which you will agree after seeing it.

You may just want to cut the kiwifruit in half and serve with a spoon, but it seems rather a shame not to slice it and expose more of the color and beauty of the fruit.

One of the nice things about kiwifruit, you don't have to have lots of them to create the effect you desire. As you will see from the recipes, it only takes one or two to make rather grand dishes take on a gourmet appearance and taste.

How do you tell when these little fuzzy fruits are ripe? They are all picked at prime eating stage and immediately cooled and held in perfectly controlled temperature and humidity conditions until marketed. They should be just barely soft like a ready-to-eat peach but not really soft. If they are hard when you buy them, just put them in a plastic bag with a couple of apples or pears. Close the bag tightly and let stand at room temperature for at least 24 hours or until kiwifruit begins to "give". If you find a good buy on kiwifruit, get a lot and store in coldest part of your refrigerator. They'll keep a month or so.

In case you're wondering why apples or pears hasten ripening, it's because they both give off ethylene gas which is nature's ripening agent. The ethylene gas triggers the ripening enzyme in the kiwifruit. Isn't nature wonderful?

Just a tip about using kiwifruit in combination with gelatin... don't. It won't set. Cooked kiwifruit will allow it to set but the kiwi loses its brilliant color and the flavor changes to a more predominately gooseberry flavor. It's best to use the kiwifruit as a colorful garnish for your favorite mold.

Kiwifruit has a zesty taste which people alternately compare with mangoes, bananas, strawberries, apricots, peaches and many other fruits. The fact is, it is slightly reminiscent of several, but with a true flavor of its own.

Kiwifruit is also used as a tenderizer and may be rubbed on steaks before broiling. In the old days, New Zealand cooks used to stuff chickens and turkeys with kiwifruit for juicy, tender birds. At current prices, however, they prefer to use the fruits in desserts and as accents to fish and fowl rather than hiding them inside!

As well as tasting terrific, kiwifruit is an excellent source of Vitamin C, low in calories.

Start the day with a sparkle with zesty, fresh tasting uncooked kiwifruit jam. It keeps its bright color, too, and will store many weeks in the freezer.

UNCOOKED FROZEN KIWIFRUIT JAM

- 3 1/2 cups well mashed kiwifruit
- 1/4 cup lemon juice
- 1 package powdered jam and jelly pectin
- 1 cup light corn syrup
- 4 1/2 cups sugar

In a large kettle, mix kiwifruit pulp and lemon juice thoroughly. Sift in pectin, stirring vigorously. Add corn syrup and mix well. Gradually stir in sugar, stirring until completely dissolved. Warning to 100° (temperature you would use for baby's milk - no hotter) will help dissolve sugar. Jam is ready to eat when sugar is dissolved.

Put in glasses or containers with tight lids. Store in freezer. If you plan to eat the jam within a week or two, just store in the refrigerator.

FESTIVE KIWIFRUIT CHICKEN SALAD

- 2 cups cubed cooked chicken or turkey
- 1 jar whole pimientos, sliced (8 oz.)
- 1/2 cup thinly sliced celery
- 2 or 3 New Zealand kiwifruit, peeled and sliced

Kiwifruit dressing

Leaf lettuce or romaine

Chill all ingredients before assembling. In a large bowl, put chicken, pimientos, celery and kiwifruit. Pour dressing over and mix carefully. Serve in bowl lined with leaf lettuce or romaine.

KIWIFRUIT DRESSING

- 1/2 cup white wine vinegar
- 1/4 cup sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon Dijon mustard
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- dash of pepper
- 1 cup salad oil
- 1 kiwifruit, peeled and cubed

Put vinegar, sugar, mustard, salt and pepper in blender. Turn on high and gradually add oil. Add kiwifruit and blend until just smooth. Chill before using.

INTERNATIONAL FRUIT PLATE

Arrange fruits in season in slices on a plate or platter. Serve kiwifruit dressing on the side or drizzle over fruit before serving.

This is really an adaptation of the famous Pavlova dessert, aptly named for the exquisite ballerina. Instead of making a large meringue base for the Pavlova, you make individual meringue shells and add the whipped cream and slices of kiwifruit. If you want to have a quickie dessert, you can buy the meringue shells at your favorite bakery, but they are really quite easy to make and much less expensive.

KIWI MERINGUE TARTS (Mini-Pavlovas)

- 4 egg whites, room temperature
- 1/8 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon cream of tartar
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 1 teaspoon vinegar
- 1/2 teaspoon vanilla
- 1 cup whipping cream
- 2 or 3 kiwifruit

Preheat oven to 250°. Cover one or two cookie sheets, depending on size, with foil. Spray with non-stick product or grease well. Beat egg whites with salt until foamy. Continue to beat, adding cream of tartar, until they stand in soft peaks when beater is removed. Add sugar gradually, beating constantly at high speed, until meringue is thick and glossy and sugar is dissolved. Beat in vinegar and vanilla.

If you have a pastry tube, fill it with the meringue mixture and make tart shells with a flat base and built up sides. If not, spoon meringue onto foil in evenly divided mounds and form into tarts.

Bake at 250° for 1 hour. Turn off heat and cool in oven for 2 hours. Remove from oven. Just before serving, fill centers with whipped cream and top with slices of kiwifruit. Serves 6 to 8.

FILET OF SOLE KIW

- 1 pound filet of sole (or other delicate white fish)
- 4 tablespoons butter
- 2 teaspoons lemon juice
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 2 kiwifruit, peeled and sliced
- 1 package herbed brown rice, cooked

Melt butter in a large heavy skillet. Carefully cook sole until delicately brown, turning once. Remove carefully to heated platter. Keep warm. Add lemon juice, salt and sliced kiwifruit to butter in skillet. Heat kiwifruit until just heated through. Put cooked brown rice on a platter, top with sole and spoon kiwifruit and butter sauce over the top. Garnish with parsley. Serves 4.