

I was speaking to a group of teachers and school superintendents one day concerning fruits and vegetables. One pleasant surprise was the popularity of Kiwi fruit once it was introduced. To my dismay, I discovered a very large percentage of people had never heard of it until it was served at school. Kiwi is a great food, so I want to cover it in this article.

It has the scientific name of *Actinidia Deliciosa* and is actually a berry. Kiwi first appeared in southern China where it was also called Yang Tao, or “sunny peach.” It is still considered the national fruit of China. From China, it was introduced to the western world when a missionary brought the fruit to New Zealand at the beginning of the 20th century. It was not introduced in the United States until it was exported to California in 1958. At first, the fruit was called “melonette,” but the name was changed to Kiwi to avoid an expensive tariff placed on all melons. The name Kiwi is from the indigenous population of Maori people in New Zealand. It is compared to the Kiwi bird, which also has a “hairy-like” skin.

Kiwi is naturally sweet, juicy, and delicious, as the name implies, (*Deliciosa*). It consists of a hairy brown peel which contains green flesh, a central white pulp, and edible black seeds.

This fruit is a nutritional powerhouse. It contains a very broad complement of nutrients, such as vitamins, flavonoids, minerals, and fiber.

It is high in potassium and low in sodium. In fact, it contains as much or more potassium than a banana. It is low in fat and contains no cholesterol.

The vitamin content is remarkable, as it contains more Vitamin C than oranges. It also contains Vitamins A, B6, folic acid, (B9), pantothenic acid, (B5), C, and E. It also contains significant amounts of copper, iron, phosphorous, manganese, and chromium.

So, what does all this mean to you as an athlete, as well as a human being? Let’s delve into the health benefits of eating Kiwi fruit.

Anti-Oxidant-We’ve covered this topic many times, and it is a recurrent theme of what makes up a great food. Remember, anti-oxidants protect our bodies against damage-producing free radicals.

Age-Related Macular Degeneration, (ARMD), which is a disease of the eye-*Archives of Ophthalmology* reports consuming three or more servings of fruit per day, including Kiwi fruit, may reduce the risk of developing ARMD. This is felt due to the high amounts of Vitamins C, A, and E.

Fiber-contains fiber, which benefits gastro-intestinal health

Respiratory Tract-Studies performed in Italy showed regular consumption of Kiwi was associated with decreased wheezing, shortness of breath, coughing, and allergic rhinitis (essentially, a runny nose).

With the high potassium content, this may possibly prevent muscle cramps seen in athletes. To me, this is a great breakfast, pre-game, half-time, and/or post-game or work out food.

Here are a few basics concerning making KIWI fruit a part of your diet:

When buying Kiwi, choose fruit with a moist, plump look. It should “give” slightly to pressure, be free of wrinkles, soft spots, and bruises.

It usually will stay fresh for two-three weeks, especially when kept out of direct sunlight.

Personally, I prefer to peel and slice it before eating. However, many like to eat the peeling. If you do, wash thoroughly to remove dirt, sand, and residual pesticides. Eating the peel provides more nutrients, but I don't care for it. It is a personal choice.

I also like to eat it cold, as I refrigerate it after purchasing.

Again, we keep talking about the benefits of eating fruits and vegetables. I eat Kiwi fruit in the mornings with a bag of French Toast Pro Bites to obtain both a fruit and vegetable protein during one setting. I also consume Kiwi at times before and after a bike ride for the aforementioned reasons. It is also great with a cup of Vanilla Yogurt, in my opinion.

Kiwi is fruit you should at least try. It has many great health benefits, especially for the athlete.

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Remember: When you take great care of your body, it will take great care of you, especially during the stress of illness or athletic competition.