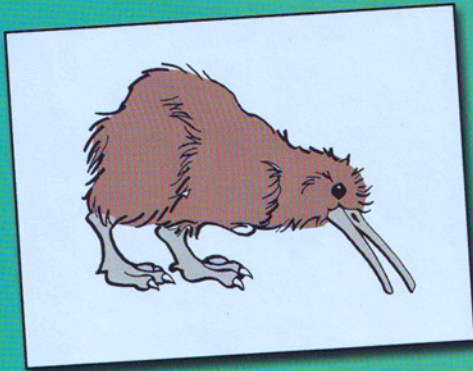


TO EAT OR NOT TO EAT...

BY BRENDA MACDIBBLE



SPOT THE KIWIFRUIT

I'm sure you will agree there is a vast difference between a fruit and a bird. For instance, a kiwifruit is small, brown, fuzzy, round and can't fly, whereas a kiwi bird is small, brown, fuzzy, round and can't fly. OK, so these two do have a lot in common except one of them has legs and a beak and runs away when you try to slice it up.

THE BIRD

Even though kiwi birds can't fly, they have a few tricks to help them survive. They have strong legs and sharp claws so they can outrun or scratch an enemy. They are secretive, alert and hide in burrows during the day. They have nostrils way down on the tip of their long bills to sniff out worms and insects below the ground and whiskers at the top.

OUCH!

Even though kiwi birds only grow to the size of a chicken, their eggs are SIX times the size of a chicken egg! The female kiwi has no room to even swallow a mouthful of worms just before it is laid. Once she has laid the egg she gets a well-deserved rest because the male kiwi sits on the egg. When the chick hatches, the adults don't feed it. It survives on a reserve of egg yolk in its belly. After 10 days when it's stronger, it leaves the burrow with the male kiwi to search for food.

YUMMY

You may think you know what a kiwi is. You may even say you've tasted a kiwi. Whatever you do, please don't say that in New Zealand. You see, in New Zealand, the kiwi is not a fruit. It is a bird.

THE FRUIT

Kiwifruit actually came from China. New Zealanders grew them in their gardens for ages calling them Chinese gooseberries. When farmers decided to grow a lot of Chinese gooseberries to sell to other countries, they changed the name to kiwifruit.

THE PEOPLE

So now you know there are two kinds of kiwi, but there's something I haven't told you: there are actually THREE kinds of kiwi. The people of New Zealand loved their odd ancient bird so much they began to use it as an emblem. They used pictures of kiwis on army badges and on things they sold overseas. Soon the people of New Zealand came to be called kiwis as well. We aren't small, brown, fuzzy and round (oh OK, just a few of us are) but none of us can fly, so there is something the three kinds of kiwi have in common.

WATCH WHAT YOU EAT

Next time someone tells you they've eaten a kiwi, ask them which kind because it is definitely illegal to eat two of them!

