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## **What is Kiwi (Kiwifruit) Picking?**

### **What is kiwifruit?**

There are two varieties of kiwifruit – Gold and Green.

Gold kiwifruit has a more delicate and smooth skin and is more prone to damage. The fruit is generally larger, and hangs more evenly in the canopy. You will pick the gold kiwifruit a lot more slowly, and will need to be careful not to damage the fruit. Gold is a lot sweeter than green. Kiwifruit grows under a “canopy” - this generally sits at around 6.2” high, but can be higher or lower depending on the orchard.



### **When is the Kiwi picking season?**

The kiwifruit picking season in Te Puke (the biggest kiwifruit area in NZ)

There are two main seasons – the Gold season and the Green season

Gold season starts around 12<sup>th</sup> March and runs until around 5<sup>th</sup> May.

The Green season generally starts around the 20<sup>th</sup> May until around 10<sup>th</sup> June.

The start time may vary, as we need to wait for the kiwifruit to pass testing for taste, ripeness etc.



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Hours of work change per contractor, but generally you will be available to work for every day through the season. Gold kiwifruit usually starts a bit later in the day, as the dew can cause the fruit to be wet, and you need to wait for it to dry. Some contractors will use lights so you can pick gold in the dark so that you can work a 9 hour day.

Green kiwifruit usually starts around 8 – 830 and will go until dark (around 530 – 6)

You will be entitled to 1 x 15 minute paid break per 5 hours worked, plus a half hour unpaid lunch break. (eg work for 2.5 hours, have 15 min break – work for 2.5 hours, have lunch – work for 2.5 hours, have 15 minute break)

You cannot pick Kiwifruit when it is wet, so this plays a big part in hours. A good contractor will communicate clearly what the plan is, and what the weather patterns are with likelihood of work/start time. A good contractor will also try to ensure that you are not sitting at work with no pay waiting for the fruit to dry! Also, as mentioned above, fruit needs to pass a test before it gets picked, so this may affect what days you work.

In general, you will get 30-40 hours per week. Some weeks will be bigger, and some smaller, but throughout the season it will even out.

The weather will change considerably during the seasons – at the start, it is the tail end of summer, and days will be hot. As the season progresses, mornings and evenings will be cold.



### **What is the pay rate?**

Gold Kiwifruit can be paid on an hourly basis, or on a contract rate (Paid per bin of kiwifruit picked). Some contractors will pay extra depending on how well you do taking care not to damage the fruit.



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Green kiwifruit is generally paid on a contract rate – i.e. per bin.

Kiwifruit is picked into a bag, which is then emptied into a bin. The bin sizes will usually be either 14, 16 or 18 “bushels” so your rate per bin can change. Contract rate is generally split between the whole team, so you need to work well together. (E.g if there are 24 people in a team and they pick 205 bins, each worker will be paid for 8.5 bins)

You generally do not get paid for the hours that you do not work.

Minimum wage in NZ will be \$20 per hour from 1 April 2021. You will be entitled to an additional 8% holiday pay, and as a casual worker, this will usually just be added to your hourly rate (i.e. pay as you go) – this would make your minimum wage including holiday pay \$21.60 per hour.

Most contractors will pay above minimum wage for kiwifruit picking. For example, our gang usually earns between \$24-30 per hour.

### **What tools do you need to pick kiwifruit?**



Kiwifruit are hand-picked – you do not need secateurs or cutters. You will wear cotton gloves everyday which will be provided to you by your contractor. The fruit is then placed in a picking bag, which has straps over your shoulders and back, and a carrier around the front. The bag empties

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from the bottom, and you will empty this into a bin (either on a trailer driven by a tractor or on the ground). You do not need to use a ladder, or colour pick – you pick every single kiwifruit. The work can be hard at times, and the bags can weigh up to 20kgs.

Work is outside, and can be around tractors and other machinery, so closed shoes are essential. Lots of water, and of course pack your own lunch.

### **Do I just work on one farm?**

Not usually – there will be some very large orchards that you may work on, but in general, a “gang” or “team” will pick on multiple orchards. For example, our gang will usually stay on one orchard between 1 and 10 days.

### **What do I need?**

You MUST have a valid working visa for New Zealand.

Own transport is usually required as you move around different orchards.

You must be hard working, keen to work as a team, happy to carry loads of up to 20kgs at a time and work up to 9 hour days.

### **Who do I work with?**

Most “gangs” or “teams” will be between 16 and 32 people. The makeup of the people in the teams will vary from locals, other backpackers, RSE workers, and more.

There will usually be a supervisor, 1-2 tractor drivers, a forklift operator and a couple of other people.

In our experience, our gangs make friends for life from all over the world!



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