

## Feijoas – harvest and post harvest

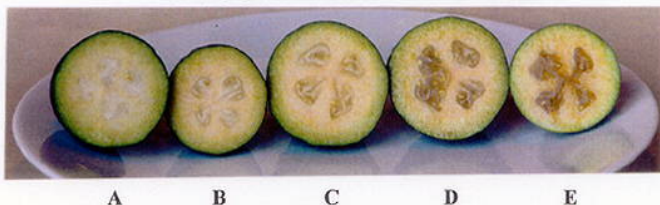
Harvesting feijoas is labour intensive because picking is done by hand and requires careful checking of the fruit. It is important to plan for the harvesting season, including thinking about how you will collect, package and store your fruit. Talk to the people you plan to sell to about their requirements for quality and packaging. If you hope to export the requirements will be quite different to those for processing and local markets.

### Harvesting the fruit

Feijoa fruit is harvested in autumn and winter, from March to June. When ripe, the fruit drop from the tree. Not all fruit will ripen at once.

To get high quality, undamaged fruit it is best to pick by hand, from the tree rather than off the ground. The fruit needs to be picked close to its natural fruit drop or it won't ripen fully after picking. This makes the harvest quite labour intensive as fruit may need to be checked several times before they are ripe enough to pick.

Ripeness is judged by size and colour of the fruit, and by how easy it is to pick – when ripe the fruit will come away easily. It is a good idea when picking to cut a few feijoas open to check the ripeness. The picture below gives a good guide to ripeness. About 80% of your fruit should look like B.



(<http://www.feijoa.org.nz/local.html>)

- A Will never ripen properly. Pulled too hard in picking.
- B Touch picking maturity. Jellied sections half white / half clear. Not yet ready to eat
- C Retail Display. Jellied sections clear. The beginning of optimum eating maturity.
- D Jellied sections clear. The end of optimum eating maturity.
- E Throw out. Flesh and jellied sections browning.

Unpleasant flavours present.

There is a growing market for organic feijoas for processing. For process quality the fruit can be picked up off the ground once it naturally drops as some damage to the fruit is acceptable. It is also possible to pick fruit for the local market from the ground if it doesn't need to be stored for long.

### Post harvest handling and packing

Feijoas bruise very easily and so need to be handled carefully after harvesting. They should be harvested into and transported in shallow containers (not bins) to minimise bruising, and kept out of the sun if possible.

The fruit needs to be wiped clean and checked for any pests or diseases – pests often hide under the calyx of feijoas. Checking for guava moth is particularly important in trying to control its spread.

It is suggested that feijoas be packed in shallow plastic containers (not more than about 12cm deep). Cardboard boxes can collapse and bruise the fruit. However, check with the people you supply about their expectations of quality and packaging.

### Storage

Ideally feijoas should be stored below 4°C from the day they are picked, or no later than the day after picking. The earlier you cool store it the longer its storage life will be.

At 4°C the fruit can be stored for 4-5 weeks. It is also important to have air movement around the fruit to blow away the ethylene gas that they produce, as the ethylene causes them to ripen more quickly.

'Te Pānui Tips' are simple fact sheets that cover topics designing organic crop production systems on the East Coast.

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