



## Nutri-Facts

Issue #20, January 2003

### In this issue: **Canned Foods to the Rescue!**

**Contents:**                   **Agent information:** F.A.Q.s About Canned Foods  
                                  **Consumer Fact Sheet:** Take a Fresh Look at Canned Foods  
                                  **News release**

Greetings all!

This February is National Canned Food Month. To help celebrate, this issue of Nutri-Facts is featuring the wonderful world of canned foods. With more than 1500 foods available in canned form, the possibilities for quick and easy meals and snacks are endless. If we can use canned foods to encourage our clients to prepare more of their meals at home, then this can have a positive impact on both their nutritional and financial health!

This issue includes information for agents, including FAQs about canned foods and web sites for quick and easy recipes that use canned foods. In addition, a consumer fact sheet (with an optional page of recipes) and a brief news release are included for your use.

As always, I appreciate any comments/suggestions for future issues of Nutri-Facts.

Happy New Year and Eat Well!

Jenna

Eat Well,  
Jenna

## Frequently Asked Questions (F.A.Q.s) About Canned Foods

These are questions frequently answered by the Canned Food Alliance

<http://www.mealtime.org/index.asp>, with additional input from Food and Nutrition Specialists with Texas Cooperative Extension.

### Nutrition

#### Q. How does canned food compare nutritionally to fresh and frozen food?

A. Very favorably. In a three-part study conducted by the University of Massachusetts, researchers found that recipes using canned ingredients were similar in nutritional and taste value to those made with fresh or frozen items. To read about the study results, go to this web site:

<http://www.mealtime.org/nutrition/results.html>

**Note from Jenna:** When we look at some canned food items that we know should be a good source of certain nutrients, it isn't always reflected on the Nutrition Facts panel. Why? Well, according to the Canned Food Alliance, manufacturers are required to put the minimum amount of a nutrient(s) that they expect to remain in the can on the label. The actual nutritional content of that canned food may be higher, but this will depend on the variety of fruit or vegetable used, the source of the nutrition information and the manufacturers' policy regarding labeling quantities. It is true that some nutrients are lost during the canning process. However, nutrients are also lost when a fresh fruit or vegetable is cooked. Because canned fruits and vegetables have been "cooked" as a result of the canning process, you have to compare the canned fruits and vegetables to fresh varieties that have been cooked. Otherwise, you are comparing apples and oranges!

### Economics

#### Q. Are canned foods an economical buy?

A. Yes, especially when the foods you want are not in season or the quality of fresh produce is poor. In addition, large supermarket chains often carry their own brand of canned food items. Compared to the more nationally-known brands, store brands are usually less expensive and the quality is often just as good.

For more information about using canned vegetables, check out the Texas Cooperative Extension publication **Canned and Frozen Vegetables: Getting the Most Nutrition for Your Money** at

<http://tcebookstore.org/pubinfo.cfm?pubid=1239>.

### Safety and Storage

#### Q. Are canned foods safe?

A. Yes. According to the Canned Food Alliance, the commercial canning process not only destroys bacteria that can cause food spoilage, but it may also remove up to 99% of the pesticide residues occasionally found in fresh produce; this is the result of the washing, peeling, blanching and heat processing of canned fruits and vegetables.

**Q. How long should we keep canned foods?**

**A.** According to the Canned Food Alliance, canned food has a shelf life of at least two years from the date of processing. Canned foods can retain their safety and nutritional value beyond two years, but changes in color or texture may occur. Canned foods should be stored in a cool (between 50 and 70 degrees F), dry place. To ensure best quality, use canned foods within one year of purchase. If foods are stored at temperatures above 70 degrees F (which is **very** possible in Texas), plan to use them sooner. For more information about home food storage, check out the Texas Cooperative Extension publication "Safe Home Food Storage" at <http://tcebookstore.org/pubinfo.cfm?pubid=466>

**Q. What is the best way to store canned foods after they have been opened?**

**A.** Unused portions of canned foods should be refrigerated in a plastic or glass container with a lid. Refrigerating leftover food in the can is not recommended as it can cause off-flavors to occur in the food. To help keep track of leftovers, date and use within 2 to 3 days.

**Q. If the outside of a can is damaged, does that mean the food is unsafe to eat?**

**A.** Not necessarily, but caution and common sense should be used. Rust or dents do not affect the contents of a canned food as long as the can is not leaking. If the can is leaking, however, or if the ends are bulged, the food should not be used. For safety reasons, don't toss those cans out with your household garbage. Instead, return the unopened container to the place of purchase.

**Q. How should one get rid of a canned food item that might be spoiled?**

**A.** If you suspect that a canned food item has spoiled, do not open or taste the food. Instead, return it to the store where it was purchased.

## **Other Fascinating Information**

**Q. Is it possible to learn when a food was processed (i.e. canned) by looking at the can?**

**A.** Yes, but you may have to do some investigating. According to the Canned Food Alliance, some companies use a code consisting of a series of numbers or letters that contain the date. Codes can differ from one processing company to another so it's best to contact the company directly. Keep in mind that well-run supermarkets rotate their stock on a regular basis to ensure that customers get the "freshest" canned foods.

**Q. Why do some cans "hiss" when they are opened?**

**A.** Some cans may hiss because they are vacuum-packed. The "hiss" we hear is a result of air pressure, which is perfectly normal. However, if a can hisses loudly or spurts when opened, it may be an indication that the food is spoiled. That food should not be eaten.

## **Recipes Using Canned Foods**

If you think about it, canned foods are the ultimate convenience food. Open the can, heat (if needed) and eat. It really doesn't get much easier than that. Plus, there are more than 1500 different food items available in canned form. Think of the menu possibilities! A number of

recipes are available from the Canned Food Alliance which can be accessed by going to the following link: <http://www.mealtime.org/recipes/>

A sample of the available recipes is included on the consumer fact sheet at the end of this issue.

### **Idea for Agents:**

If you are asked to give a program on short notice, you could use this information, along with the handout and news article, and call the program "Canned Foods to the Rescue," "Canned Food Cuisine," or "Can Do with Canned Foods." For fun (if time is available), have a "Canned Food Challenge." To do this, participants will need to bring a can of food to the program (have extra cans on hand just in case some people forget or they all bring green beans). Collect the cans and put them on a table. At the end of your program, let audience members get into small groups. Have each group write down as many menu ideas as possible with the canned foods available on the table. Each group can share their ideas with other audience members. The team that has the highest number of menu ideas is the winner. This activity will get folks thinking about ways to use canned foods and will also give your participants additional ideas on how they can use canned foods in their meals and snacks. At the conclusion of the program, have a box available in case participants want to donate their can of food to the local food pantry or food bank.

### **References:**

American Dietetic Association: <http://www.eatright.org/nfs/nfs0601.html>

Canned Food Alliance - News and Views, Answers to Commonly Asked Questions about Canned Food Storage, and 10 Surprising Facts about Today's Canned Foods. Accessed 12/02 at <http://www.mealtime.org/about/>.

Van Laanen, P. Safe Home Food Storage, Texas Cooperative Extension bulletin B-5031, August 2002.

Klein BP, and Kaletz R. Nutrient Conservation in Canned, Frozen, and Fresh Foods. University of Illinois, Department of Food Science and Human Nutrition. Prepared for the Steel Packaging Council, October 1997. Accessed 12/02 at <http://www.aces.uiuc.edu/~nutrican/>

# Take a Fresh Look at Canned Foods

Busy schedules and consumer demands for convenience have played a role the rising number of meals that are eaten out. At the same time, people are becoming more interested in nutrition and the foods that they eat. While canned foods, including fruits and vegetables, have been around for decades, some people rate them second to fresh. Below are reasons why we should take a second look at canned foods:

**1. Availability:** With more than 1500 different foods available, canned foods are more than a quick side dish. Think of the menu possibilities!



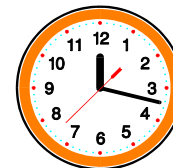
**2. Price:** Many supermarkets have their own brands of canned foods at prices that are less than national brands. Compared to national brands, the quality of store brands is often just as good.



**3. Quality:** When fresh produce is not available or is not in season, canned varieties make a great substitute. For best quality, use canned foods within one year of purchase and store them in a cool, dry place.

**4. Nutrition:** Some people think that canned foods are second rate when it comes to nutrition. New research suggests that this is not true. In some cases, canned fruits and vegetables are more nutritious than fresh! Most canned fruits and vegetables are processed the day they are picked which helps preserve nutritional quality.

**5. Convenience.** Persons interested in putting convenience into their kitchens



should definitely take a second look at canned foods. Open the can, heat (if needed) and eat. It doesn't get much easier than that.

## Safety First!

Although canned foods are convenient and easy to use, common sense still rules. Do not buy canned foods that are dented, especially if the dent is on the seam. If a canned food is leaking or if the ends are bulged, don't use it. Instead, return the unopened can to the place of purchase. Remember, being thrifty should never come before food safety.



## Corn Chip Chicken Chowder

(Serves 4)

### What you need:

- 1 can (14 1/2 ounces) chicken broth, preferably reduced sodium
- 1 can (14 1/2 ounces) Mexican-style diced tomatoes, undrained
- 1 can (4 1/2 ounces) diced mild green chiles
- 1 can (12 to 16 ounces) corn, drained
- 1 can (10 to 12 ounces) chicken breast, drained
- 1 cup coarsely crumbled tortilla chips, preferably unsalted

### How to make it:

1. Wash your hands. Make sure your cooking area is clean.
2. In a medium saucepan, bring the broth, tomatoes and chiles to a boil.
3. Stir in corn; reduce heat, simmer 2 minutes.
4. Add chicken, stirring gently to keep pieces from breaking up too much. Simmer 1 minute until heated through.
5. Ladle into bowls and sprinkle with tortilla chips, stirring chips into hot soup.

**Tip:** Stir 2 tablespoons chopped fresh cilantro into the soup along with the chicken.

## Classic Green Beans

(Makes 6-8 Servings)

### What you need...

- 1 can (28 ounces) or 2 cans (14 1/2 ounces each) green beans, drained
- 1 can (10 3/4 ounces) reduced fat condensed cream of mushroom soup
- 3/4 cup milk
- 1 can (2 3/4 ounces) fried onion rings, divided
- 1/8 teaspoon ground black pepper

### How to make it...

1. Wash your hands. Make sure your cooking area is clean.
2. Heat oven to 350° F.
3. In medium bowl, combine all ingredients, reserving half of the onion rings.
4. Pour into 1 1/2-quart baking dish.
5. Bake, uncovered, for 30 minutes.
6. Top with reserved onion rings and bake 5 minutes longer or until top is browned.

For more recipes using canned foods, visit the Canned Food Alliance web site:

<http://www.mealtime.org/recipes/>

News release, January 03

According to research, the amount of time spent preparing meals at home continues to decline. Convenience is in high demand and, as a result, the number of meals we are eating out continues to rise. At the same time, however, people are becoming more interested in nutrition and the foods they eat. Is it possible to have convenience and nutrition in the kitchen? "Yes," says Jenna Anding, Ph.D., R.D., L.D., assistant professor and nutrition specialist with Texas Cooperative Extension. "With a little planning, a variety of meals, snacks, and desserts can be prepared with canned foods that most of us already have at home."

February is National Canned Food Month and the Canned Food Alliance consortium (<http://www.mealtime.org/recipes/>) has developed hundreds of recipes, including Corn Chip Chowder and Quick Goulash (see below) that can be made from canned foods. But how nutritious are meals prepared with canned ingredients? Researchers at the University of Illinois examined the nutritional composition of selected canned fruits, vegetables, legumes, poultry and fish. Their results demonstrated that those foods were nutritionally equal and sometimes superior to the nutritional value found in the fresh and frozen varieties.

"Nutrition is just one reason to give canned foods a second look," says Anding. Other reasons include variety and quality. According to the Canned Food Alliance, there are more than 1500 different foods available in canned form. The high quality of canned foods, including legumes, fruits, and vegetables, makes them a perfect substitute when fresh produce is not available or is too expensive.

Convenience is also another reason to use canned foods. "For many canned foods, all you have to do is open, heat and eat. It really doesn't get much easier than that," notes Anding. But Anding is also quick to add that food safety rules still apply when using canned foods. When shopping, buy canned foods that are not dented especially if the dent is on the seam. If a canned food is leaking or if the ends are bulged, don't use it. Instead, return the unopened can to the place of purchase. After opening, refrigerate uneaten portions of canned foods immediately in a covered container. Remember, being thrifty should never come before food safety.

For more information about canned foods, contact \_\_\_\_\_, county Extension agent at \_\_\_\_\_ (phone number).

Recipes (Source: Canned Food Alliance <http://www.mealtime.org/recipes/>)

### Quick Goulash (serves 6)

#### Ingredients:

2 pounds ground beef	2 tablespoon chili powder
2 teaspoon salt	1/2 teaspoon pepper
1 green pepper, chopped	1/2 cup onion, chopped
1 can (28 ounce) whole tomatoes	1 can (8 ounce) mushrooms, drained
1 can (15 ounce) tomato puree	1 pound elbow macaroni (cooked)

**Preparation:** Wash your hands. Make sure your cooking area is clean. Cook macaroni according to package instructions. In a large skillet, brown the ground beef along with the chili powder, salt, pepper, green pepper and onion. Add tomatoes, mushrooms and puree, simmer for 3 minutes. Add the cooked macaroni and mix well.

**Preparation Time:** 5 minutes      **Cook Time:** 15 minutes

**Nutritional Information Per Serving:** Calories 617; Fat 19g (Saturated 7g); Cholesterol 100mg; Sodium 1,487mg; Carbohydrate 73g (Dietary Fiber 7g); Protein 43g.

### Corn Chip Chicken Chowder (Serves 4)

#### Ingredients:

1 can (14 1/2 ounces) chicken broth, preferably reduced sodium  
1 can (14 1/2 ounces) Mexican-style diced tomatoes, undrained  
1 can (4 1/2 ounces) diced mild green chiles, undrained  
1 can (12 to 16 ounces) corn, drained  
1 can (10 to 12 ounces) chicken breast, drained  
1 cup coarsely crumbled tortilla chips, preferably unsalted

#### Preparation:

Wash your hands. Make sure your cooking area is clean. In a medium saucepan, bring the broth, tomatoes and chiles to a boil. Stir in corn; reduce heat, simmer 2 minutes. Add chicken, stirring gently to keep pieces from breaking up too much. Simmer 1 minute until heated through. Ladle into bowls and sprinkle with tortilla chips, stirring chips into hot soup.

Tip: Stir 2 tablespoons chopped fresh cilantro into the soup along with the chicken.

**Preparation Time:** 5 minutes      **Cook Time:** 10 minutes

**Nutritional Information Per Serving:** 300 calories; 11 g fat; 45 mg cholesterol; 1,090 mg sodium; 30 g carbohydrate; 3g fiber; 21 g protein.