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BUYING CANNED FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

Canned fruits and vegetables are very popular with homemakers. America's bountiful table is set with some 350 foods that come from more than 30,000,000,000 cans per year --an average of 788 cans per family. 288 of these cans of food are fruits and vegetables.

Nutritive Value - There are some minor losses of minerals in canning. Water-soluble nutrients are dissolved in the liquid in which the food is canned. Thus, it is wise to use all the liquid in the can. Vitamin A is only slightly affected in canning. There is some loss of thiamine and riboflavin. The retention of vitamin C is higher in citrus products than in tomato juice and canned vegetables. In some cases, it has been found that canned vegetables are superior in nutrients to fresh produce that has been allowed to stand in a market, especially in sunlight or warmth, or that has been washed.

Brand Identifications and Grade Labeling - Brand identifications do not give consumers the information needed to make an intelligent selection. Many of the canned foods are bought "sight unseen" except for the information on the label. Food shoppers have long felt the need for more descriptive labeling of canned foods, but some do not make use of the information that is now given!

Certain information is required by Federal Law. All canned food labels provide:

1. The common or usual name of the product.
2. The net contents--in terms of weight or liquid measure.
3. The name and address of the producer or distributor.
4. For certain canned foods (mixtures) a list of all ingredients. The ingredients that makes up the largest percentage of the whole is listed first. The item which makes up the smallest amount is listed last.

The Food and Drug Administration has also set up "standards of identity" for almost all of the canned vegetables and for some canned fruits. These standards indicate:

1. Style of pack - whole, halves, sliced, peeled, or unpeeled, diced, cut, irregular pieces, etc.
2. Variety, when important - clingstone or freestone, white or yellow, sweet or sour.
3. Density of syrup - extra heavy, heavy, light, slightly sweetened, packed in water, etc.

In addition to information required by law, many processors and distributors use descriptive labeling, added voluntarily. The added information may include:

1. Brand name.
2. Illustration of the product, but law provides picture must not be misleading.
3. Size of product--a guide in selection for particular use.
4. Maturity of product--helps in selecting flavor and texture preferred.
5. Contents, cups or pieces--an aid in buying the amount needed.
6. Recipe suggestions.

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For the shopper who wants to buy by grade rather than by guess and by grab, there are grading standards established by the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture. Not all canners use grade labeling, however. Labels of foods inspected and officially graded by USDA representatives may carry one shield showing that they were packed "under continuous inspection" and another with the legend that gives the grade. These are the four grades:

- Grade A or Fancy stands for "excellent." Use it for special occasions.
- Grade B, Choice or Extra Standard, is for "good." Use it for everyday.
- Grade C or Standard is for "fair." Use it for thrift.
- Grade D or substandard. May be used for pies and sauce.

Consumers should not be misled by such designations as "Extra Special," "Superb," "Supreme," "Superior," "Our Best," or any other grading that has no recognized meaning. These are terms selected by packers or distributors who are taking advantage of established specifications.

All grades have the same food value, but each serves a different purpose and has a different price. Where fine appearance is less important, grade B or C may be just as good and, if cheaper, the better buy.

A Guide to Some Common Can Sizes

| CAN NAME | APPROX. WT. | APPROX. CUPFULS | NUMBER OF SERVINGS | PRODUCTS FOR WHICH USED, PRINCIPALLY |
|---------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|--------------------|--|
| 6 oz. | 6 oz. | 3/4 cups | 6 with water added | Frozen concentrated |
| 8 oz. | 8 oz. | 1 cup | 2 | Vegetables and fruit |
| No. 1, picnic | 10 $\frac{1}{2}$ oz. | 1 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup | 2 to 3 | Vegetables, some fruit juices, soup, meat, fish |
| No. 303 | 16 oz. | 2 cups | 4 | Vegetables and fruits |
| No. 2 | 1 lb. 4 oz. | 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups | 4 to 5 | Vegetables, fruits, juices |
| No. 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ | 1 lb. 13 oz. | 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups | 6 to 7 | Fruits, vegetables, juices, kraut, pumpkin |
| No. 3, Cylinder 46 oz. | 3 lbs., 2 oz. | 5 3/4 cups | 12 | Fruit and tomato juices, Whole chicken |
| No. 10 | 6 lbs. 9 oz. | 12 cups | 24 | Fruits and vegetables for institutions & restaurants |

More About Canned Goods - Artificial flavoring, artificial coloring, or chemical preservatives in foods must be listed in the labeling. The better food processors do not use preservatives because they are seldom necessary. Canned foods keep because they have been heat-processed in permanently sealed containers. The heat process destroys spoilage bacteria which might be present--the sealed container prevents further infection. Canned food will keep almost indefinitely, as long as nothing happens to break the seal. Store canned foods in a cool, dry, place. Dents in the can are harmless unless they cause a leak. Rust does not damage canned food unless it is severe enough to perforate the can. Bulging cans indicate spoilage. Freezing does not spoil canned food but may change the appearance of the product. Food may be stored in the opened can but should be kept cool and covered. A few acid foods may dissolve a little iron from the can and develop a "metallic" taste, but this is not dangerous to health. To avoid discoloration of certain foods, some cans are enamel lined.

Material prepared by Mrs. Clara N. Leopold, Home Management Specialist, and approved by Ethel Diedrichsen, Foods Specialist, U. of N. College of Agriculture, Lincoln