

CANNED FOOD: WHAT TO KEEP ON HAND AND HOW TO USE IT

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Let's Do This

While canned foods often get a bad rap, they can be a delicious and nutritious alternative for many people. In fact, research has shown that those who eat more canned fruits and vegetables actually consume more produce overall than those who do not. Canned fruits and veggies are picked at the peak of ripeness, and then canned only hours afterward, which means they can be more flavorful and nutritious than some fresh varieties. In fact, the nutrient content increases when canning some produce, such as tomatoes, which have a higher concentration of lycopene when canned. Canned pumpkin contains three times more vitamin A compared to $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of cooked fresh pumpkin. Bottom line: whether you're short on time, want to save some money, or looking to use up pantry ingredients, canned food items can help bring a meal together in a pinch.

Key Tips To Note

1. Opt for low-sodium or no salt added varieties. Canned foods are generally packed with salt (it acts as a preservative). You can always add more salt to taste later on, so it's best to start with less and then add more to your taste preference.
2. Drain and rinse your canned foods in a colander before use. Rinsing can reduce sodium content by up to 40 percent.
3. When buying canned fruit, choose varieties that are packed in 100% juice or in its own juices, not heavy syrup, which contains significant added sugar.

What Kind Of Canned Foods Should I Keep On Hand?

1. Beans – all varieties. Dry beans take a lot longer to cook, so save some time by using canned versions. Beans are packed with nutrients such as dietary fiber and protein. Use canned beans to add to chili or soup, or pulse in a food processor with seasoning, bread crumbs and egg to form bean burgers. Or, top a burrito bowl with black beans as your protein source.
2. Vegetables – canned veggies (green beans, carrots, corn, spinach) are great to throw in to any dish where texture doesn't really matter, such soups or casseroles. The more vegetables, the better.
3. Fruit – canned fruit packed in its own juice or 100% juice is a great way to sweeten Greek yogurt, oatmeal or smoothies.
4. Tuna, Salmon, Chicken – an easy protein source to use for quick meals. Throw together a chicken or tuna salad mixed with Greek yogurt and avocado, or make salmon patties as an easy weeknight meal.
5. Canned, Diced Tomatoes/Sauce – tomato sauce can be easily made when having these ingredients on hand. Add some dried herbs, such as basil, oregano and garlic powder to enhance flavor. You can also use as a base for chili and soup, or even make homemade salsa.
6. Sauces. More frequently coming in jars, it's always good to have a few jarred sauces on hand to add great flavor to a dish. Think pesto to add to pasta, harissa paste as marinade for chicken, or olive tapenade used as a sandwich spread instead of mayo.