

Canned Food “Can” Save Time and Money

When you are deciding what to make for dinner or another meal, do you open your cupboards and check what’s there? Canned food, along with other cupboard staples such as beans, rice and pasta, makes cooking a breeze any season of the year. For example, you can make chili with canned tomatoes and beans and serve with chilled canned peaches for a quick meal.



Many people do not meet the daily goal for fruits and vegetables, and canned foods can help with that goal. A recent study showed that children who ate more canned fruits and vegetables were more likely to meet their daily nutrition goals. They consumed the vitamins, minerals, fiber and protein they needed for growth.

Here are some reasons to keep canned food in your pantry.

Enjoy good nutrition all year round.

- Canned fruits and vegetables are processed at their peak freshness, so they are nutritious additions to the diet.
- Choose canned foods wisely:
 - To decrease sugar, choose canned fruit in 100 percent juice.
 - To decrease salt, choose canned soups, vegetables and other foods with less sodium. Compare nutrition labels. If you drain and rinse canned beans, you can reduce the sodium content by about 40 percent.

Did you know?

Canned, fresh, frozen and dried fruits and vegetables all count toward the daily goal. We all should aim to fill half of our plate with colorful fruits and vegetables. Compare the costs of different forms of fruits and vegetables.



Keep ready-to-eat foods on hand.

- Canned food lasts a longer time than fresh fruits and vegetables, so you may waste less food.
 - According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, use canned vegetables and meats within five years of purchase and canned fruit within 18 months of purchase.
 - Write the date of purchase on the cans and store them in a dry, cool space (below 85 F). Be sure to rotate your stock so you use the oldest food first.
- You can safely use cans with small dents. Don’t use bulging, rusted, leaking or deeply dented cans. Discard any cans with sharp dents in the seam.

Make budget-friendly meals fast.

- Canned food often is less expensive than fresh foods. Much of the prep work has been done for you. The vegetables and fruits are already chopped and ready to use in your recipes.
- Stock up on canned food your family will use when it’s on sale to save additional dollars.

This recipe was adapted from the Canned Food Alliance (www.mealtime.org).

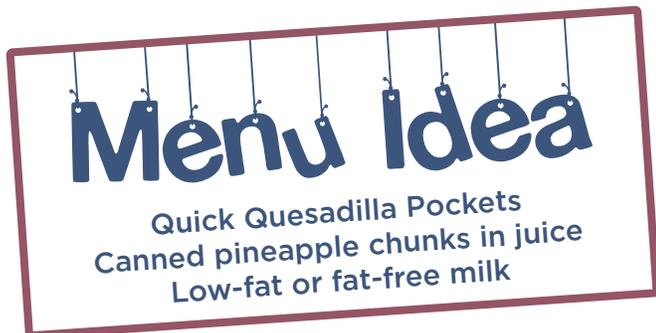
Quick Quesadilla Pockets

- Nonstick cooking spray
- 1 Tbsp. canola oil (or other oil)
- 1 large red bell pepper, finely diced
- ½ tsp. chili powder
- ½ tsp. onion powder
- 1 (15.5-ounce) can pinto or black beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 (15-ounce) can no-salt-added corn, drained
- ½ c. salsa (mild or medium)
- 1½ c. shredded, reduced-fat Mexican blend cheese
- 6 (8-inch) tortillas (white or whole wheat)
- Sliced black olives, onions, tomatoes (optional garnishes)
- Reduced-fat sour cream (optional)



Preheat the oven to 400 degrees. Lightly coat a large baking sheet with cooking spray and set aside. Heat oil in a large, non-stick skillet over medium-high heat. Add bell pepper, chili powder and onion powder, and cook until tender, about 5 minutes. Add beans, corn and salsa, and heat through. Reduce heat to low. Add 1 cup of cheese and stir until cheese melts, about 1 minute. Assemble quesadillas by arranging the bean mixture evenly over half of tortilla. Fold over, press down gently and place each on the baking sheet. Sprinkle remaining cheese and olives (if desired) on top of quesadillas. Bake until cheese melts and tortillas become crisp (about 8 minutes). Cut into quarters and serve with your preferred garnishes.

Makes six servings. Without olives or sour cream, each main dish serving has 390 calories, 14 grams (g) fat, 17 g protein, 50 g carbohydrate, 2 g fiber and 630 milligrams sodium.



I accidentally left canned food in my car and the cans froze. Can I still use the food?

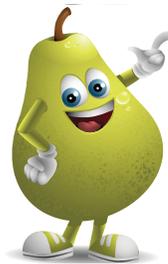
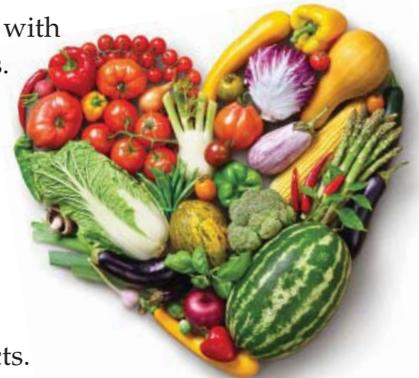
It depends. Thaw the frozen canned food *in the refrigerator*. If you notice any off colors or odors after you open the thawed cans of food, discard the food. Do not taste it! Discard any cans that appear swollen or bulging; dispose of the damaged cans where no one, including animals, can get them. If the cans are okay after thawing, store them in the refrigerator, use them soon and heat vegetables thoroughly.

FoodWi\$e Tips of the Month

February is American Heart Month. Visit www.heart.org to learn more ways to keep your heart healthy.

Which of these heart-healthy nutrition tips do you follow most days?

- I fill half of my plate with fruits and vegetables.
- I make at least half of my grain choices whole grains.
- I choose lean protein sources.
- I choose fat-free or low-fat dairy products.
- I include nuts and legumes (cooked beans) in my diet.
- I limit sweets and sugar-sweetened beverages in my diet.



Just for Fun

What are twins' favorite canned fruit? Pears!

Julie Garden-Robinson, Food and Nutrition Specialist

Contact the local office of the NDSU Extension Service for more information on food and nutrition or managing your food dollar.

