Canned Food Storage Safety

Some canned foods can last almost indefinitely if they are stored in the right conditions and are not dented or bulging. Make sure to exercise discretion when using old canned foods. And keep these safety tips in mind when storing canned foods for long periods of time:

* Always remember to label your cans as you buy them. I would recommend simply writing the month and year they were purchased on the top of the can with permanent marker. For most items, you should be quite safe to eat these items within two years of this date. After two years, make sure to inspect the cans carefully before you eat the food inside.

* For the longest shelf-life, store canned foods in controlled, cool and dry locations, with temperatures varying between approximately 68 to 78 degrees. This should be a storage location inside your home, and not in the garage or a storage facility with a wide temperature range.

* Periodically check your stored cans to look for cans that are badly dented, bulging, rusty, leaky, or that have broken seals. Large dents can break a seal in a can, even if the seal still looks intact. Bulging cans must be thrown out, even a slight bulge is a very bad sign. You should not see the top of your cans dome up even in the slightest. To test for this, push the can lid and see if it pushes in and pops back. If it does, throw it out.

* Never eat canned food that has a strange odor, color, or flavor, or that spurts when it is opened.

Proper rotation of your food storage will keep you from having your canned food go bad. As the old saying goes, when in doubt, throw it out! It is not worth risking your family's safety to be this frugal.

Source: family.com
What Do the Dates on Your Canned Foods Mean?

Are you unsure about how long a can of tuna will last? What do the stamps printed on the cans mean? Can the stamped dates tell you how long an item will store? Those codes sure can be confusing! Here are some things to keep in mind when storing canned foods:

First, you may be able to get some information from the product codes printed on the cans, but not much. Cans that list a "use by" date or a "best if eaten by" mean more than random numbers or dates without labels. Other codes or dates printed on cans are not even for customers, they are only labels for the food producers themselves. Here are some common dates printed on cans and other packaged foods and what they mean:

**Use-by:** Pay close attention if a can has a use-by or expiration date. Canned foods very rarely have use-by or expiration dates. Baby products, like formula and canned baby food are some of the few items with these labels. These and other specific foods with expiration dates are very important and should be followed accurately.

**Sell-by:** Make sure to purchase canned foods before the sell-by date. But there is not common consensus for how long food will store on your shelf after this date. This varies between different types of foods, storage conditions, and maybe some luck. The general guideline of two years applies to foods with sell-by dates that have past.

**Best-if-used-by dates:** These dates are placed on products as a prediction of how long the item will last in peak condition, or with the best flavor and optimum nutrition. This date is not a sell-by date or an expiration date. Canned foods can last years past this date, even though they may technically not be at the peak of quality.

**Other dates:** Dates that are coded or not given an explanation are most likely printed only for the manufacturer, often as a label code of the day it was canned. These dates are sometimes coded so that the average consumer cannot decipher them. For information on how to interpret some of these codes, check out this article.

Perhaps you read this article hoping to get some exact answers about how long to store your canned foods. And, maybe now after reading it you still feel confused. Well, that’s because there are no specific answers for how long canned foods will store. It is really a guessing game when trying to determine how long they will remain good. There is no way to tell for sure how long something will last. If you do your own research, you will find many different answers. Read the next article in the series about canned foods, "How Long Will Your Canned Foods Last?" to get specific recommendations for various types of canned foods.

Source: family.com