



FAQ

All About Canned Tuna

Canned tuna –it should be simple to choose, after all, it’s just fish in a can. But if you really stop and look at the canned tuna section in your local grocery store, it can begin to look like a sea of confusion with a variety of packaging options, and numerous benefit and health claims. Have no fear, following are answers to help better understand, and appreciate, everyone’s favorite pantry staple – canned tuna:

Q: How many different species of tuna are there?

A: Tunas belong to the fish species “Thunnus.” There are many species of tuna, but only three that are commonly found in cans or pouches: skipjack, yellowfin and albacore. Skipjack and yellowfin are considered “light meat” tunas and albacore is “white meat” tuna.



Q: What is the difference between “light meat tuna” and “albacore tuna”?

A: In addition to being different fish, light meat and albacore tunas have different flavor and texture profiles. Light meat tuna has a stronger flavor and softer texture, and does not have as much fat as albacore tuna. These fish tend to be smaller in size. Albacore tuna, in contrast, has a firm texture and mild flavor. Albacore tunas are larger fish and have more fat per ounce than light meat.

Q: Is canned tuna farm raised or wild caught?

A: Tuna is a salt-water fish and found in the oceans throughout the world. Most commercially-available canned or pouch tuna is wild caught. Farm raised tuna is relatively new and there are very few tuna farms.

Q: How is pouch tuna different from canned tuna? Is the shelf life different?

A: Canned and pouch tuna are processed in similar ways. The tuna are frozen while on the fishing vessel. As soon as the boat is docked, the frozen fish are unloaded, thawed, inspected and cleaned. After they pass inspection, they are precooked, cooled, hand cleaned and re-inspected. Each fish is then cut into tenderloins and then fillets, placed on conveyers and sent to the filling machines and choppers. The fish moves down the line, is added to cans and depending on the style, water, broth, oil and flavorings may be added. The filled cans are then vacuum sealed and cooked to sterilize the product. This process is very much the same as canning fruit or vegetables.

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Pouches of tuna may also have flavorings added, after which they are vacuum sealed and cooked to sterilize the product. Each pouch is hand inspected to make sure the seals stay intact. The big difference with a pouch of tuna is that less liquid is added so there is no draining required of the pouches. The shelf life for a pouch of tuna is 3 years which is comparable to a can of tuna.

Q: What are the benefits of eating canned tuna?

A: Tuna is an excellent source of protein and much lower in fat, saturated fat and cholesterol than many other protein choices. Tuna also has essential vitamins and minerals such as niacin, vitamin B12 and selenium. The majority of fat in tuna comes from omega-3 fatty acids that are important in reducing the risk of heart disease. The American Heart Association and Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2010 recommend that Americans eat two servings of fatty fish, like tuna, a week. Many studies have found that people who eat fish two or more times a week have lower rates of heart disease.

Tuna is a quick, easy protein choice that works for lunch or dinner – eat it right out of the pouch or can, put it on crackers, a salad or sandwich, and it works perfectly in pasta and rice dishes.

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