

# Get Smart on Canning and Canned Foods

Canned foods are a smart solution for better eating in today's fast-paced world. Cans seal in nutrition, freshness and flavor, without sacrificing convenience and affordability. Helping Americans understand the benefits of canned foods can empower them to make better, healthier choices in the grocery aisle and feel confident about serving meals at home using canned foods.

To better understand people's perceptions and uses of canned foods, the Can Manufacturers Institute commissioned research on consumer knowledge and uses of canned foods. The survey found that canned foods play a very important role in the American diet, yet many consumers do not understand the canning process.

## Following are key points from the research:

### Canned foods are popular and broadly used.<sup>1</sup>

- Nearly all (97 percent) Americans have eaten a canned food in the past 30 days, many of whom have chosen a canned fruit and/or vegetable.
- In an average week, Americans consume nearly six cans of fruits and vegetables.
- Canned fruits and vegetables are considered to be extremely or very important in helping Americans prepare convenient, nutritious and affordable meals. This is especially true for those Americans on food assistance, who have a limited access to fresh fruits and vegetables, or who are challenged by the cost, storage and preparation of fresh fruits and vegetables.

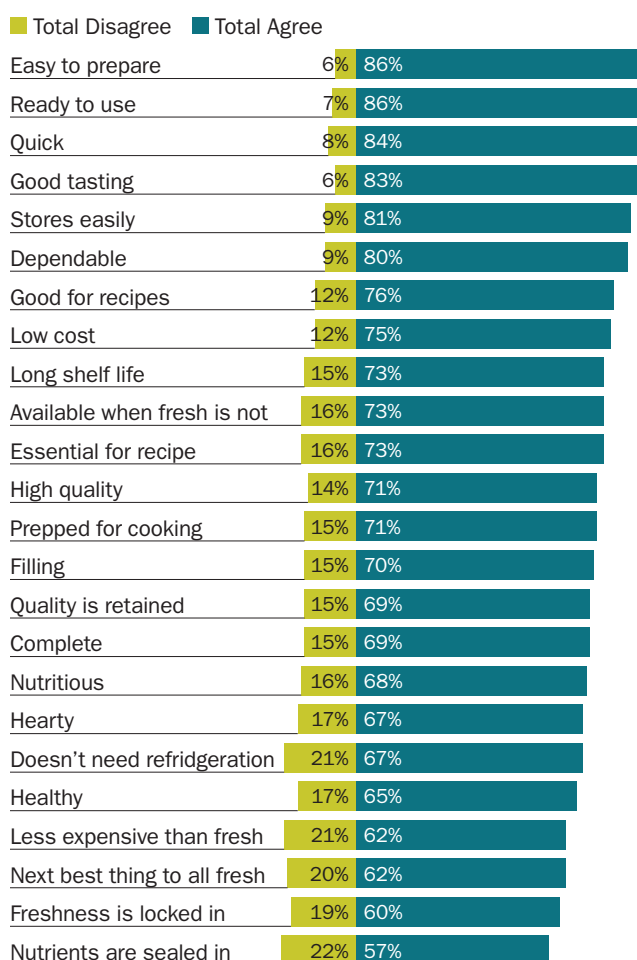
### Among the top motivators for choosing canned foods are (see Figure 1):<sup>2</sup>

- Convenience/Quick
- Taste
- Storage/Shelf Life
- Dependable
- Cost/Affordability
- Usefulness for Recipes/Cooking
- High Quality
- Nutrition/Health

### Despite widespread usage of canned foods, only a handful of consumers understand what goes into canning:<sup>2</sup>

- 40 percent of consumers have very little knowledge of the canning process.
- Of those who correctly answered that the process for canned food is the same basic process as home canning, they incorrectly believe:
  - That cans would have a shorter life without preservatives (81 percent)
  - All cans have preservatives (68 percent)

**Figure 1:**  
Top Reasons Canned Items are the Right Choice to Include in the Meal



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To help reinforce the use of canned foods as a healthy, convenient mealtime solution, consumers should know these key facts:

- Canned foods are a nutritious option because cans seal in freshness, flavor, and nutrition. When foods go through the canning process, nutrients are locked in so the food never loses vitamins and nutrients.
- In fact, a review of the research found that canned fruits and vegetables are nutritionally similar to fresh and frozen and in some cases, even better.<sup>3</sup> For example, canned tomatoes have more lycopene, which is associated with reducing cancer risk and has more B vitamins than fresh tomatoes.
- In general, canned vegetables can be as low as 50 percent of the costs of frozen alternatives and as low as 20 percent of the cost of fresh with virtually no sacrifices in nutritional quality.<sup>3</sup>
- Canned fruits and vegetables are not subject to seasonality or refrigeration requirements, making them easily accessible to everyone – from corner convenience stores to supermarkets. So, they are an excellent option for the 23.5 million Americans who live in “food deserts” where they have little or no access to healthy and nutritious foods.<sup>4</sup>



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## References

1. Research was conducted using Toluna's On-line Omnibus; interviews were completed on July 25-27, 2012. The total sample of 1,017 respondents is representative of U.S. adults and is balanced on three key demographics: age, sex and region of the U.S. Additionally, respondents on SNAP/WIC food assistance and/or have limited access to fresh food were identified for comparative analysis of consumption behaviors and attitudes towards canned and fresh foods.
2. The survey was conducted by Artemis Strategy Group with a national cross-section of primary grocery shoppers who are meal decision makers and use canned food occasionally or more often. It was a national sample of 1,833 U.S. adults, aged 18+, with a gender split at 70 percent female and 30 percent male. The survey, conducted on-line, was fielded from June 11-17, 2012. The Margin of Error for a sample size of 1,833 is +/- 2.3.
3. Miller S and Knudson B. "Nutrition & Costs Comparisons of Select Canned, Frozen and Fresh Fruits and Vegetables." Michigan State University. March 2012.
4. USDA Economic Research Service. "Access to Affordable and Nutritious Food: Measuring and Understanding Food Deserts and Their Consequences. Report to Congress." Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Agriculture, 2009. Available at <http://www.ers.usda.gov/Publications/AP/AP036/AP036.pdf>.