

KNOW *the* Processed Foods

You Buy



ELEANOR LOOMIS

Use of Processed Foods Is Increasing

The demand for processed foods is increasing. This demand is due to several things: higher incomes, the shift of population from farm to nonfarm areas, an improvement in food distribution, a reduction in size of families, and the employment of more wives outside the home. Today's processed foods, canned or frozen, are convenient to use and are available in nearly every store at relatively stable prices.

Times Are Changing

In grandfather's time, consumers canned their own fruits, vegetables, and meats. They made their own soups, sausage, and salad dressings. The consumers of today buy everything from soup to nuts canned or frozen. They are interested in convenient foods of quality at a low price.

Today 10 per cent of the urban food budget is spent for canned or frozen foods. In 1953, we commercially canned 20 billion pounds of food. We have trebled our canning industry since 1938. In 1953, we froze 12 times as much food as in 1938.

The use of canned and ready to serve processed products has been rapidly expanding. In 1952, one-fourth of the meat production was processed and one-half of the orange crop.

Today baby foods are an important section in the modern super market. In 1953, 50 pounds of baby food were processed for every child under 3 years of age. In 1930, we had very little processed baby foods.

Table 1 shows the increase in the use of processed food. It gives the per capita consumption of canned and frozen fruits and vegetables in 1935-39 and the preliminary amount for 1955 with the percentage of increase or decrease.

This table does not show the increase in the use of frozen food dishes such as TV dinner and various forms of frozen meats, fish, poultry, and desserts. The production of prepared frozen food increased 67 per cent from 1954 to 1955. Prepared frozen foods are those that have received one or more preparatory

operations usually performed in the home such as cooking.

Table 1. Per Capita Consumption of Canned and Frozen Fruits and Vegetables *

	Average 1935-39	Preliminary 1955	Percentage of increase or decrease
	pounds	pounds	
Fruits			
Canned fruit	14.8	20.3	36+
Canned juices	3.8	13.1	247+
Frozen (including juices)8	8.1	875+
Dried	5.7	4.2	26-
Vegetables			
Canned	29.6	40.8	38+
Frozen4	5.9	1,350+

* Source: *The National Food Situation*, February 1956.

Informative Labels Are Necessary

With food shoppers buying more processed food every day, it is necessary that these foods have informative labels that tell the shopper what is inside the package. The quality of the product in the can or package of frozen food should be identified so the food shoppers will know what they are buying. Some labels are not specific as to variety of the product, the proportion of solids and juice, or the sweetness of the sirup.

Brands vary from time to time, and quality varies among different cans of the same brand of the same kind of food.

The big problem is to identify quality in processed food. The household buyer needs to know grades and standards and the uses for the various grades available.

Grades would serve household buyers better if more emphasis were put on cooking quality, flavor, nutritive value, and amount of liquid, rather than on the appearance of the product.

Food Standards and Grades

Food standards or grades on canned and frozen foods are the cornerstone for the best protection for everyone—the producer, the processor, the wholesaler, the retailer, and the consumer. Many purchas-

ing agencies use the United States standards or specifications, or facts based on these standards, in making their purchases.

Federal Requirements

Mandatory federal regulations require that all canned foods shipped in interstate commerce be labeled with the following information:

Legal name of the item in the container, such as corn, peas, peaches.

Net content in weight or fluid measures.

Name and address of the manufacturer, packer, or distributor.

List of all ingredients in the container except in certain foods such as catsup or mayonnaise for which government standards of identity are set.

For certain fruits and vegetables the Food and Drug Administration requires that labels give style of pack (whole, halves, sliced, diced), variety (cling or freestone peaches), and the sweetness of sirup used with fruits (light, heavy, extra heavy).

Descriptive Labels

Some packers go farther than these legal requirements and use descriptive labels which are more complete. They use a brand name and indicate the stage of maturity, the variety, the number of servings, the contents of the container in terms of cups or number of pieces, the size of the pieces, seasonings, recipes for using the product, and a picture of the product.

Federal Grades

Some processors or distributors use Federal Grades in addition to the mandatory requirements and descriptive label. The United States Department of Agriculture has worked out standards for 69 canned fruits and vegetables for Grades A, B, and C. Only two grades are established for some of the commodities. These are usually A and C. There are grade standards for 28 frozen fruits and vegetables.

Any canner or distributor may use the terms "Grade A" or "Grade B" or "Grade C" on labels to designate the grade of the commodity. This type of labeling is not mandatory, but products thus labeled must meet the specifications of the U. S. standards for the grade claimed.

All United States standards for frozen and canned fruits and vegetables include a scoring system. For example:

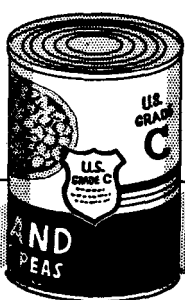
	Canned tomatoes	Canned red sour pitted cherries	Frozen lima beans
Grade A	90-100 points	85-100 points	90-100 points
Grade B	75-89 points	No Grade B	80-89 points
Grade C	60-74 points	70-84 points	70-79 points

Grade Labeling

These grades appear on the can as Grade A or Grade B or Grade C.

The quality classes for canned fruits and vegetables established by the United States Department of Agriculture provide a reliable means of identifying quality. Regardless of the brand name or the price asked, every can of fruit or vegetable can be classified as Grade A, B, C, or below C grade.

The grade of the product when sold in volume to the jobber or chain store is often labeled: Fancy, Choice, Standard, and Substandard.



Grade A (Fancy)

Highest quality; carefully selected as to size, color, degree of maturity, and freedom from blemishes.

Fruits are almost always packed in sirup—extra heavy or very sweet, heavy or sweet, light or somewhat sweet, or in water slightly sweetened. (The thickness of the sirup is not a factor considered in determining grade.)

The fruit may be packed in water without any sweetening.

Grade B (Choice for fruit) (Extra Standard for vegetables)

Grade B canned fruits are well developed and well colored and are packed in either sirup or water.

Grade B canned vegetables are not quite so succulent and tender as those of Grade A.

Grade C (Standard)

Grade C products are not so uniform in color, size, and maturity as Grade B.

The fruit is not as highly colored or carefully selected as to size. Although mature it may vary as to ripeness.

The fruit may be packed in sirup or water.

Grade C vegetables are usually more mature than vegetables in the higher grades.

Below Grade C (Substandard)

Some canned fruits and vegetables fail to meet the requirements of Grade C, yet may be wholesome and nutritious in certain respects. If the products are labeled to meet the regulations for such foods as established under the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act, they may be sold on the retail market.

If fruits and vegetables are below Federal standards and if they are sold across state lines, the vegetable label must state: "Below U. S. Standards—Low Quality but not Illegal," and the fruit label must read: "Below U. S. Standards—Good Food not High Grade".

Continuous Inspection

The letters U. S. precede the grade if the foods are processed under continuous inspection by the USDA and fit the federal standards for quality.



U. S. Grade A (Fancy)

U. S. Grade B (Choice for fruit)
(Extra Standard for vegetables)

U. S. Grade C (Standard)

This label also bears a shield insignia and the statement "Packed under continuous inspection of the USDA." The shield which may be embossed in one end of the container indicates the product was packed under continuous inspection. It does not indicate whether the grade of the content is A, B, C, or off grade.

All Grades Are Good Buys

All grades are wholesome, nutritious, edible foods. They differ in texture or color, in size or irregularity of pieces, in maturity of product, in cloudiness of liquid, or in type of sirup used.

Clear-cut letter grades of this kind afford a valuable guide to the housewife. For, in making purchases, she can readily select a commodity of a known quality for the price she is able to pay and for the purpose she wishes to use it. Grade A because of its fine appearance is best for fancy desserts and salads. Grade B and C are economy buys for cooked dishes.

Buy the Quality to Suit the Use

Over four-fifths of the annual pack of fruits, vegetables, and juices are put up in the following nine sizes:

Can Sizes

Size and Number	Product	Weight	Approximate cups
8 ounces, commonly called "buffet"	Fruits, vegetables, specialties	8 oz.	1 cup
Picnic can	Condensed soups, some fruits, vegetables, meat and fish products, specialties	10½ oz.	1¼ cups
12 ounce, vacuum can	Mostly for vacuum packed corn	12 oz.	1½ cups
300, commonly called "1 pound" can	Pork and beans, baked beans, meat products, cranberry sauce, blueberries, specialties	14-16 oz.	1¾ cups
303, often called "16" or "17" ounce can or jar	Fruits, vegetables, meat products, ready-to-serve soups, specialties	16-17 oz.	2 cups
2	Fruits, a few vegetables, juices, specialties	1 lb. 4 oz. or 1 pt. 2 fluid oz.	2½ cups
2½	Fruits, some vegetables such as pumpkin, sauerkraut, spinach, and tomatoes	1 lb. 13 oz.	3½ cups
46 ounces	Fruits and vegetables, juices, whole chicken, corn, pork and beans, condensed soup for institutional use	3 lb. 3 oz. or 1 qt. 14 fluid oz.	5¾ cups
10	Restaurant and institutional size cans of fruits and vegetables	6½ to 6¾ lbs.	12 to 13 cups

Storage

Store canned goods in a cool, dry place. High humidity causes cans to sweat and rust. Rust does not damage canned foods unless it is severe enough to perforate the can. High storage temperatures affect the color and flavor of many products, though not their wholesomeness.

Any unused portion of a can may be placed in a clean dish or, according to the National Cannery Association, may be left in the jar or can in which it came. Be sure to refrigerate these leftovers.

Store frozen foods in the freezing compartment of the refrigerator or in a freezer.

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA, INSTITUTE OF
AGRICULTURE, ST. PAUL 1, MINNESOTA

Cooperative Extension Work in Agriculture and Home Economics, University of Minnesota, Agricultural Extension Service and United States Department of Agriculture Cooperating, Skull Butte, Director. Published in furtherance of Agricultural Extension.

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

10M-5-56



3 1951 D04 088286 2