

# Canned Food (commercial and home)

## Pros and Cons of using canned goods for food storage

**Note: This report isn't long enough to discuss home canning in depth. Watch for a future report which will discuss home canning in depth!**

### Pros:

- It's very easy to do. You buy the cans at the grocery store and put them away for later use!
- You are buying exactly what you like to eat! Taste is a huge factor in nutrition!
- The food is already prepared, so your prep time is greatly reduced.
- Cans are usually smaller allowing for more variety in what you are eating. You don't have to consume an entire #10 can of something before you move on to something else.
- Commercially canned food is usually done at the peak of freshness, so the quality is usually very good.

### Cons:

- The smaller the serving size, the more it usually costs. Basing an entire families food storage requirements on commercial canned food will cost more than dehydrated or freeze dried food.
- The shelf life of canned food is much shorter than dehydrated or freeze dried foods.

## Canned Food (commercial and home) (continued)

### Cons (continued):

- **We recommend this web site** for the best information on shelf lives, use-by dates, etc. It's an awesome site!  
<http://www.stilltasty.com/>

**Storage Times are usually for QUALITY ONLY; Although canned food loses it's nutritional value over time, it doesn't necessarily go "bad" merely because it's old.**

The bottom line: **Don't be so quick to toss out or donate those canned food items sitting on your basement shelves just because they hit their printed expiration date.** When all else fails, open them and use your senses to determine if they are still edible (they probably will be). (Swollen cans are the best indicator that something is wrong—bad food also smells bad)

When in doubt some high heat from your stove and an iron skillet can serve as another method by which to "cleanse" the food prior to eating it.

# Plastic Retort Packages (AND Military Meals)

**Note: This report will be an overview of the various military meals (MREs and such). Tac Tips has a very in-depth report on MREs and other Military Food!**

## What Are They?

We've seen them all over the place! Those who are veterans remember them as the pouch that holds the entrée in the MRE. Most of us have seen them in the grocery stores as the "flexible can" in quick, ready to eat pouches.

In science terms, it is a heat resistant bag made of laminated plastic films. It is then heat sealed and sterilized by pressure cooking in a retort (autoclave). As a result, the retort pouch contains heat treated food that is safe from micro-organisms.

## Pros:

- Lighter than canned food.
- Because it's flexible, it can take more "abuse".
- Because it's flat, it's easier to store.
- It's easier for individuals to eat as most of them are in single serving packages.

## Plastic Retort Packages (continued)

### Cons:

- **Convenience usually comes with a cost!** Individual serving sized food costs more.
- Shelf life is very dependant on the temperature at which they are stored. Not a good food to store in the trunk of your car in the summer.

## So, What is the Best Food to Buy?

We don't think any ONE type of food is the best. We do think that a combination of all of them can be useful.

### Storage of Fruits and Vegetables

- Freeze Dried or Dehydrated are clearly the choices. Price is the huge factor here, with dehydrated fruits and vegetables being very reasonable.

### Storage of Meats

- Canned meats are the tastiest, and we recommend home canning for meats (WATCH FOR A REPORT ON HOME CANNING OF MEATS SOON!)

### Storage of Single Serving Foods

- Retort packaging is the most convenient to store, carry and eat.