

# Canned and Frozen Vegetables

## *Getting the Most Nutrition for Your Money*

By Jenna Anding\*

**C**anned and frozen vegetables are nutritious. They are naturally low in fat, unless packaged in butter, cream sauces, or with fat-containing foods. Salt is often added to canned vegetables, but low salt (sodium) products are available.

Canned or frozen vegetables can be substituted for fresh produce if fresh vegetables are not available or are poor in quality.

The U.S.D.A. Food Guide Pyramid suggests that we eat three to five servings of vegetables a day. A serving equals  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of cooked vegetables or  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup vegetable juice.

### **Shop Smart!**

**T**he cost of canned and frozen vegetables depends on many factors, including brand name and style (whole versus cut).

#### **Brand name**

Consumers often relate brand to quality. The producers of nationally known products spend great amounts of money and effort to make sure that the quality of their product stays the same from year to year.

While it may be easy to spot the brand names, don't forget about the store and generic brands of vegetables. They often taste just as good as the national brands and usually cost less. Make an effort to try one store brand canned or frozen vegetable each month.

#### **Style (whole versus cut)**

A vegetable that is packed whole often will cost more than the same vegetable that is packed cut, diced or chopped. This is because the vegetables that are packed whole are specially chosen for their appearance. To save money, choose cut or chopped vegetables instead of whole especially when the vegetable is planned for use in casseroles, soups or stews.

### **Be Safe!**

#### **Canned Vegetables**

For maximum quality, store cans in a place no warmer than 75 degrees F. Use within 1 year unless noted otherwise on the can. Do not buy or use cans that are bulging or leaking. The vegetables may be contaminated and may cause a serious illness! Do not to buy cans with dents because small pinholes may accompany the dents. Once a can is opened, refrigerate the contents in a glass or plastic container and use within 3 days.

#### **Frozen Vegetables**

Frozen vegetables will keep for 8 to 12 months when stored at 0 degrees F or lower. If they have thawed and been refrozen, ice crystals will be on the outside of the package and the package may be misshaped. They are usually safe to eat, but the quality likely will be reduced. Do not buy frozen packages that are limp or wet. Once used, store the uneaten food in the refrigerator and use within 3 days. If you wish to use only part of a package, be sure to return the unused vegetables back to the freezer before they thaw.

\*Extension Nutrition Specialist, The Texas A&M University System.

## Check the Chart!

The following chart identifies the availability of a number of canned and/or frozen vegetables. It also lists the key nutrients provided by the vegetables. Key nutrients are listed if a serving (1/2 cup of

cooked vegetables or 3/4 cup vegetable juice) provides at least 10 percent of the recommended daily values, based on a 2,000-calorie diet. A (C) next to a nutrient means that the nutrient is found in highest amounts in the canned form; an (F) means more of the nutrient is found in the frozen form.

### Availability, Nutrient Content and Suggested Uses of Selected Canned and Frozen Vegetables

Vegetable	Availability	Key Nutrients	Comments/Uses
Asparagus	canned,frozen	Vitamin C and Folate	Expensive. Use as a side dish.
Beans,Baked	canned	Protein, Fiber,Thiamin, Magnesium, Potassium, Zinc and Phosphorus	Low cost. Use as a main or side dish.
Beans,Green or Wax	canned,frozen	Fiber (F) and Vitamin C	Use cut beans in salads and mixed dishes.
Beans,Lima or Butter	canned,frozen	Protein, Fiber,Vitamins B <sub>6</sub> and Folate, Potassium, Phosphorus,Iron,Zinc, Magnesium, Copper and Manganese	Available in white, green and yellow. Green limas are youngest. Low cost side or main dish.
Broccoli	frozen	Fiber,Vitamins A,C and Folate, and Manganese	Available as whole spears, florets,cuts, pieces,or chopped.Use as side dish or in casseroles.
Brussels Sprouts	frozen	Fiber,Vitamins B <sub>6</sub> , C and Folate	Look like mini cabbage heads.Use as side dish.
Cauliflower	frozen	Vitamin C	Highest quality products will be white; those with lower quality will be a little gray or brown but will turn white when cooked.Use as a side dish or in mixed vegetable dishes.
Corn	canned,frozen	Folate (C)	Frozen corn may be whole-grain or yellow. Canned corn may be whole, cream-style or vacuum packed (very little juice). Use as a side dish or in mixed vegetable dishes.
Mixed Vegetables	canned,frozen	Fiber and Vitamin A	Usually includes carrots,corn,green beans, lima beans and peas.Use as a side dish or in soups and stews.
Okra	canned,frozen	Folate and Vitamin C	Canned okra may be used in soups and stews.
Peas (Black-eyed, Cream and Purple Hull varieties)	canned,frozen	Fiber, Protein, Folate, Iron,Magnesium, Manganese and Potassium	Low cost. Can be used as a main or side dish.
Peas,Green	canned, frozen	Fiber,Vitamins C and Folate	Cans may be labeled with the size of the pea.Use as a side dish or in soups and stews.
Potatoes, Sweet	canned, frozen	Fiber, Magnesium, and Vitamins B <sub>6</sub> , A and C	Good as a side dish or in desserts.

Vegetable	Availability	Key Nutrients	Comments/Uses
Spinach	canned,frozen	Fiber, Vitamins A and Folate, Iron (C), Magnesium and Manganese	Good as a side dish or in casseroles.
Tomatoes	canned,frozen	Vitamin C	Available whole, stewed,diced,sliced, crushed,in a paste or in a sauce. Use in pasta dishes,chili, stews and other mixed dishes.
Turnip Greens	canned,frozen	Vitamins A,C and Folate (C)	Use as a side dish.

## References and Resources

L-1845, "Nutrient Needs at a Glance." Texas Agricultural Extension Service.

B-5031. "Safe Home Food Storage." Texas Agricultural Extension Service.

Pennington, J.A.T. *Bowes and Church's Food Values of Portions Commonly Used* 7th ed. Lippincott-Raven Publishers, 1998.

HE8490, "Safe Food Storage and Temperatures." University of Florida Cooperative Extension Service.

Home and Garden Bulletin #167, "How to Buy Canned and Frozen Vegetables." U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Home and Garden Bulletin Number 252, "The Food Guide Pyramid." U.S. Department of Agriculture, Human Nutrition Information Service.

---

The author acknowledges Peggy Van Laanen, Extension nutrition specialist, Mary Bielamowicz, Extension nutrition specialist, and Cheryl Supak, BLT program director, for their contributions to and review of this publication.

---

### Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service

[AgriLifeExtension.tamu.edu](http://AgriLifeExtension.tamu.edu)

More Extension publications can be found at [AgriLifeBookstore.org](http://AgriLifeBookstore.org)

Educational programs of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service are open to all people without regard to race, color, sex, disability, religion, age, or national origin.

---

The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas Cooperating.