



Eat Right
WITH ROUSES



by Esther, Rouses Dietitian

As consoling friends always point out after a breakup, “there are plenty of fish in the sea” — and on Rouses grocery shelves. Our variety of canned seafood seems endless: tuna, salmon, mackerel, sardines, anchovies, escargot, tiny shrimp, crabmeat, sprats, wild herring, kipper snacks, oysters and clams (I’m still waiting for canned crawfish!). The Health and Human Services Department’s new Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommends eating at least eight ounces of seafood or shellfish a week (*see page 51 for more on these guidelines*). With so many different varieties to choose from, it should be easy to incorporate seafood into your diet.

Tuna

Canned tuna comes with different labels — albacore, chunk light, white, solid white, in oil, in water, in spring water, in olive oil and in sunflower oil. In oil or in water are pretty self-explanatory, but what about chunk light and the rest?

Chunk light typically refers to skipjack tuna but could also be a mixture of tuna species including yellowfin, tongol or big-eye tuna. It has a stronger flavor than the albacore varieties and also costs less. Chunk white or white refers to albacore tuna — most likely it will say albacore on the label. According to Bumble Bee brand, the albacore variety has a lighter colored flesh (hence the “white”), as well as a milder flavor and firmer consistency. Chunk comes in smaller, flaked pieces, while solid should be the solid steak.

Light tuna is an economical choice, and it’s lower in mercury, which is a bigger concern in larger and older fish who have more exposure. One can of light tuna has about half the amount of mercury found in some albacore varieties. Albacore is also marginally higher in fat and calories. The FDA recommends limiting your albacore consumption to six ounces, or one average meal per week, and 12 ounces of light tuna a week. Always choose tuna packed in water because they tend to have higher eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA) and docosahexaenoic acid (DHA) levels as well as smaller omega 6:omega 3 ratios — a good thing!

But which is better: canned or fresh? Both have benefits so it really comes down to a taste-and-texture preference and limiting exposure to mercury. The FDA recommends limiting your consumption of tuna steaks to six ounces a week to avoid the high levels of mercury, which can accumulate in the blood stream over time and also cause harm to unborn babies or young children. Canned tuna has lower levels of mercury and is also cheaper than fresh tuna, yet it retains the healthy benefits found in fresh. Opt for BPA-free cans and sustainable, pole and line caught albacore to free your conscience — some companies use a method called longlining which has been linked to overfishing, unintentional bycatching, and even violations of workers’ rights.

Don’t let the threat of mercury deter you from eating seafood. Fish can be a great source of the omega-3 fatty acids EPA and DHA, which are actually helpful in the brain development of children. Seafood is also lower in unhealthy saturated fats, generally lower in calories, and a great source of protein, iron, vitamin D and selenium. According to the FDA, mercury is naturally occurring in our environment but is exacerbated by industrial pollution, which falls from the air and into the water where it accumulates in larger, older fish that are highest on the food chain. The most commonly eaten fish that are low in mercury include shrimp, canned light tuna, pollock, catfish, and salmon.



Salmon

Canned salmon can be less expensive than fresh but can also be higher in sodium, and most cans include the skin and bones, which can be off-putting to some. However, one USDA study found that the canned version of pink salmon had more omega-3 fatty acids than fresh salmon, and if you’re willing to eat the soft (and chewable), tiny bones, a 3.5-ounce serving of canned salmon can provide almost as much calcium as a glass of milk. Canned salmon also tends to be wild-caught as opposed to farm-raised, which means the mercury content may be even less than some fresh-farmed varieties.

Mackerel

Mackerel is an oily, fatty saltwater fish. Fatty fish are actually better for you than some leaner fish because they have more of the omega 3 fatty acids your body needs but doesn’t produce itself. The benefits of eating fatty fish were first noticed in the 1970s when researchers studied the diets of the Eskimo and concluded that their high intake of oily fish contributed to lower risks of heart disease when compared to the typical Western diet.

Oily fish also include salmon and anchovies, which we know come canned or fresh, and benefits include cardiovascular health with lower blood lipid levels and blood pressure control. While there are few food sources with natural vitamin D, oily fish like mackerel, salmon, and anchovies tout the highest levels.

Anchovies and Sardines

These two fish are like siblings that get mistaken for twins. Both varieties of small fish come canned in oil or water. Roughly 140 species of fish are called anchovies while there are 20 species called sardines, which are a part of the herring family. Anchovies are significantly higher in sodium than sardines when canned because they are often preserved in salt. One two-ounce can of anchovies can contain up to 1,651 milligrams of sodium — that's almost 70% of your DV in only 12 tiny fillets. A two-ounce serving of sardines is roughly 194mg of sodium, only 8% of your DV.

Shrimp

According to the USDA nutrient database, canned shrimp is higher in calories, lower in protein, higher in fat, and almost seven times higher in sodium than cooked, fresh shrimp. In my opinion, taste-wise and nutrition wise, canned doesn't compare to Rouses fresh gulf shrimp.

Crabmeat

As with shrimp, I prefer fresh crabmeat, but we do sell both all white and lump-style crabmeat in cans. Lump crabmeat is typically broken pieces of jumbo lump, which come from the muscle of the back legs, and is good for making crab cakes. All white comes from both the claws and legs. It has a sweeter flavor and goes well on salads. Some canned varieties of crabmeat have twice the amount of sodium of fresh crabmeat and often lose their moisture and lovely texture since the canning process requires the meat be heated at high temperatures. Overall, crabmeat is an excellent source of seafood because it's low in fat and calories but still provides all the benefits of seafood like healthy fats and lean protein.



> Canned Seafood

Consuming canned seafood can be a simple and budget-friendly way to get the weekly recommended amounts of seafood, but no need to stop at eight ounces — the more seafood the better, keeping in mind your mercury exposure.

Oysters

Oysters are a great low calorie source of protein, and while raw oysters may taste good, for a few people, eating them can be harmful due to the risk of *Vibrio vulnificus*. The bacteria can cause symptoms like vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pain, and even life-threatening illness for those who may have a weakened immune system, like children or older adults. There's no sure way to know if a raw oyster has *V. vulnificus* because it doesn't alter the taste, appearance, or odor of the oyster. The only way to truly know your oyster is safe to eat is after it's been cooked. This can be a benefit of eating canned oysters because they are cooked before being canned. As is usually the case, plain canned oysters will be higher in sodium compared to raw, which can be helped by draining the liquid. Canned smoked oysters are significantly higher in sodium and saturated fat than plain canned and raw. Since citric acid is added during the canning process, canned oysters contain vitamin C, whereas raw oysters do not. Canned oysters also tend to be higher in many B vitamins and vitamin A, while levels of these vitamins are marginally lower in raw versions. However, raw oysters are higher in vitamin K and still serve as a great source of vitamin E. For food safety purposes, I feel it is my professional responsibility to recommend plain canned or cooked oysters. As for me, I'll still be ordering them on the half shell.

