

Setting Up a Food Storage Program - Cans

While canned foods aren't exactly the most sustainable part of a food storage program they do have a number of advantages - they store easily ; they are robust and vermin proof ; a wide variety of products are canned , some which are not storable in any other packaging . They are readily available , they already contain water and so do not need reconstituting like dried foods , most can be eaten cold or can be cooked up just by piercing the can and applying heat directly to the container . On the other hand they are heavy , relatively expensive and getting rid of the empties can be a pain although most areas have recycling initiatives that accept food cans.

As is common with most food storage the cooler you store it the longer it keeps , you should aim to keep the temperature below 21oC and if possible close to 10oC . In the normal urban environment without a cellar this is difficult . Under the house is a good storage area if you have access to it or a well ventilated storage cupboard in the centre of the house or on the southern wall .

A friend of mine bought some boxes of tinned vegetables and stored them in his roof , after six months he took them down to check on them and found that the contents had deteriorated so much that even the dog knocked them back . This just goes to prove that the cooler you store them the longer they last .

Just how long canned foods will last in storage depends upon which report you read , the current idea is that under reasonable storage conditions (under 21oC) most canned foods will last 18 months to 2 years . After this time has elapsed there is a slow breakdown of vitamins although the food remains palatable . I have eaten canned carrots , corn and potatoes which was 4 years old and found little or no difference between it and freshly bought canned goods . Inverting the cans once a month prevents "fallout" of particles inside the cans to the bottom which can start it rusting from the inside out , so this will increase storage life .

Vegetables

Are usually canned in brine and can be a bit salty if you are not used to it , many "low salt" brands are available. If you do not use canned vegetables on a regular basis but regularly use fresh or frozen potatoes , carrots , corn , peas etc buy a few cans of each and try them out on the family. If you have some canned vegies in stores it will make it easier for you to last out any interruption to fresh supplies and act as a backup to your vegie patch . Also possibly worth storing might be tomatoes , mushrooms , baked beans etc and if you like a bit of Chinese cooking mini corn , water chestnuts and bamboo shoots.

Fruit

~~This one's too old!~~
This one's too old!

There is usually no prejudice against tinned fruit and most members of the family can eat and enjoy it . Tinned pineapple is more versatile than most fruits as it can be eaten in hot or cold dishes , and it has a longer shelf life than other fruits (2 years as opposed to 1 year) . Pineapple juice (available in 3 litre cans) also has a longer

shelf life than other juices except tomato . Another point in its favour is that it is 100% juice not a so called fruit "drink" ie diluted with water.

Meat and Fish

Canned protein is more expensive than fruit or vegies so make sure buy only those types that your family is sure to eat . Also be sure to buy the better quality brands and only Australian produce (the same goes for all your stores) . The cheaper Asian or European imports may not be up to the quality of the home grown stuff , not to mention the balance of

payments! As in all other areas of food storage try before you buy , invest in a couple of cans of each and see what will be eaten by the family and what won't . The popular items can then become part of your storage program . Due to their greater expense it would be difficult to put away vast amounts of tinned protein but they can best be made use of to add flavour to vegetable or grain dishes . I have eaten 5 year old spam and two year old tinned ham and found it palatable but the idea is to rotate your stocks as often as possible.