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# **Buying Canned and Specialty Foods**

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**Market Basket Mastery Series**

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# BUYING CANNED AND SPECIALTY FOODS

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**T**he label on the can is your best buying guide. It is important because it serves as a "window" of the can.

The Federal Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act requires certain information on the labels of all canned foods. In addition, for shoppers' convenience, canners add other helpful information.

## **A. INFORMATION REQUIRED BY THE FEDERAL FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION**

1. The common or usual name of the product.
2. The net contents—in terms of weight or liquid measure.
3. The name and address of the producer or distributor.

## **B. DESCRIPTIVE LABELING ADDED VOLUNTARILY BY CANNERS**

1. Brand name.
2. An illustration of the product.
3. Size of product.
4. Maturity of product.
5. Seasoning (when used).
6. Contents of can measured in cups or number of pieces.
7. Number of servings.
8. Recipes and suggestions.

The label must not be false or misleading in any way. Imitations must be prominently labeled. If the food is made of two or more ingredients they must be listed by their common or usual names. They should be named in the order of their predominance in the food. For some foods standards of identity, quality and fill of container have been set. These are fixed by order of the Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare.

A definition and standard of identity tells of what ingredients a food is made and sometimes specifies the proportions. The standards require that certain basic ingredients must be used, and designate other ingredients which may be used at the packer's option. No other ingredient may be added. Don't look for a full list of ingredients on the label of a food for which a definition and standard of identity has been set. The ingredients are named in the standards and need not be listed on the label. But when the interests of the consumer require it, some optional ingredients must be named.

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(The circled M's indicate the information required on the label.)



Standards of quality do not grade foods as "fancy," or "A," "B," or "C." They set a minimum quality below which the foods must not fall unless appropriately labeled. For example, if canned tomatoes are not red enough or if peas are over-mature, they must be labeled in bold letters of a size specified according to the size of the can.

Standards of fill of container set the minimum quantity of the food that may be put in the container without special slack-fill labeling. If the product does not meet the standard it must be conspicuously labeled "Below Standard in Fill."

If vitamin content is claimed on the label the food must contain the amount stated. The label of a food with an added vitamin, or of a food for special dietary use, must state the percentage of the minimum daily requirement of the vitamin that a reasonable daily amount of the food will furnish.

#### BUY GRADED FOOD WHENEVER POSSIBLE

Grades have been developed for a wide variety of processed fruits and vegetables—and a number of related products such as peanut butter, jams, jellies, pickles, olives and honey.

The grade names U.S. Grade A (or U.S. Fancy), U.S. Grade B (or U.S. Choice or U.S. Extra Standard), and U.S. Grade C (or U.S. Standard) are used for most of these products, although there are a few exceptions.

In general, Grade A (or Fancy) represents an excellent quality in processed fruits or vegetables. Grade A products are uniform in size and color,

are practically free from blemishes and are the proper degree of maturity or tenderness. This quality is most suited for special uses, as in desserts or salads, when appearance and texture are of prime importance.

Grade B (or, usually, Choice for fruits, Extra Standard for vegetables) is a good quality and a high proportion of processed fruits and vegetables are of this grade. Such products may not be as uniform in size and color or as tender or free from blemishes as Grade A products. This grade may be termed a general-utility grade and is quite satisfactory for most uses.

Grade C (or Standard) processed fruits and vegetables are a fairly good quality. They are just as wholesome and may be as nutritious as higher grades and they have a definite value as a thrifty buy for use in dishes where appearance or tenderness are not too important.

The Department inspects and certifies these products as to quality and condition upon requests of processors, buyers, Federal and State purchasing departments, or other interested parties. These applicants pay the cost of inspection.

Any processor or distributor may use the terms "Grade A," "Grade B," or "Grade C" on labels to describe the quality of his products, whether or not they have been inspected. However, products thus labeled must meet the specifications of the Department's standards for the grade claimed; otherwise the products may be considered as mis-labeled.

## Know the Sizes and Select the Size Can That Best Suits Your Family Needs

There are at least 50 different common can sizes on the shelves of a typical food market today. The most common container sizes and products packed in them are given below:

### COMMON CONTAINER SIZES

Industry term	Container		PRINCIPAL PRODUCTS
	Consumer Description		
	Approx. net weight or fluid measure (Check label)	Approx. Cups	
8 oz.	8 oz.	1	Fruits, vegetables, *specialties for small families. 2 servings.
Picnic	10½ to 12 oz.	1¼	Mainly condensed soups. Some fruits, vegetables, meat, fish, *specialties. 3 servings.
12 oz. (vacuum)	12 oz.	1½	Principally for vacuum packer corn. 3 to 4 servings.
No. 300	14 to 16 oz.	1¾	Pork and beans, baked beans, meat products, cranberry sauce, blueberries, *specialty. 3 to 4 servings.
No. 303	16 to 17 oz.	2	Principal size for fruits and vegetables. Some meat products, ready-to-serve soups, *specialties. 4 servings.
No. 2	1 lb. 4 oz. or 1 pt. 2 fl. oz.	2½	Juices, ready-to-serve soups, some *specialties, pineapple, apple slices. No longer in popular use for most fruits and vegetables. 5 servings.
No. 2½	1 lb. 13 oz.	3½	Fruits, some vegetables (pumpkin, sauerkraut, spinach and other greens, tomatoes). 7 servings.
No. 3 cyl. or 46 fl. oz.	3 lb. 3 oz. or 1 qt. 14 fl. oz.	5¾	"Economy family size" fruit and vegetable juices, pork and beans. Institutional size for condensed soups. Some vegetables. 10 to 12 servings.
No. 10	6½ lb. to 7 lb. 5 oz.	12-13	Institutional size for fruits, vegetables and some other foods. 25 servings.

Meats, fish and seafood are almost entirely advertised and sold under weight terminology.

Infant and Junior foods come in small cans and jars suitable for the smaller servings used. Content is given on label.

\*Specialties—Food combinations prepared by special manufacturer's recipe.

### WHEN THE GRADE DOES NOT APPEAR ON THE LABEL, TRY DIFFERENT BRANDS

Study the labels, contents, quality, and price. Keep notes on the backs of the labels; then make your next purchase based on these comparisons. Buy the grade and quality best suited to your needs and purse.

We often prepare foods in ways that make the finest quality unimportant to the finished product. It would be foolish to buy a high-priced steak for stew. Top grade fruits and vegetables are not necessary when a lower grade serves as well and saves money.

### REDUCE THE AMOUNT OF SPECIALTY FOOD BOUGHT

Specialties give you less food value for your money. Fancy packs, fancy jars, and ready-prepared foods are in the luxury class.

Sources of information:

"Read the Label" misc. Publ. No. 3, U.S. Dept. Health Education and Welfare.

National Canners Association

"Shoppers Guide to U.S. Grades for Food" USDA H.G. 58

This is No. 3 in the series Market Basket Mastery. Others are:

1. First Aids to Food Buying
2. Buying Fresh Fruits and Vegetables
4. Buying Meat
5. Buying Convenience Foods

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