

GUIDELINES FOR EVALUATING CANNED FOOD

When in doubt, throw it out!



<p>SEVERE DENTS ON SIDE SEAM, NEAR RIM, OR THAT PREVENT STACKING</p>	
<p>SIDE SEAM INCOMPLETE, BLOWN OUT, OR MISWELDED</p>	
<p>BULGING OR PUFFED ENDS</p>	
<p>PITS OR PINHOLES</p>	
<p>LEAKS</p>	
<p>MISSING OR ILLEGIBLE LABELS</p>	
<p>PITTED RUST</p>	

Store canned foods and other shelf-stable products in a cool, dry place. Never put them above the stove, under the sink, in a damp garage or basement, or any place exposed to high or low temperature extremes. For best quality, store **high-acid foods**, such as tomatoes and other fruit, up to **18 months**. **Low-acid foods**, such as meat and vegetables, can be kept **2 to 5 years**. If cans are in good condition (no dents, swelling, or rust) and have been stored in a cool, clean, dry place they are safe indefinitely.

While extremely rare, a toxin produced by *Clostridium botulinum* is the worst danger in canned foods. **NEVER USE** food from containers that show signs of botulism: leaking, bulging, rusting, or badly dented cans; cracked jars; jars with loose or bulging lids; canned food with a foul odor; or any container that spurts liquid when opening. **DO NOT TASTE THIS FOOD!** Even the tiniest amount of *botulinum* toxin can be deadly. (USDA Food Safety Inspection Service)