

Expiration Dates of Canned Foods

By Joseph Parish

One of the most frequent questions often asked by preppers who have recently begun their food storage program is how long specific foods will last before going bad. Although many companies list expiration dates for their products, I generally have found these to be more of a CYA than anything else. Usually the corporation would rather err on the side of safety than risk a legal entanglement. I personally do not place much value in these dates for I have eaten canned vegetables that had expiration dates 5 years in the past.

I survived the food and found nothing wrong with it. In a nearby town we have a food discounter who purchases bulk supplies of expired foods. Once they have purchased these products at a drastic discount, they re-offer them to the consumer at reduced prices. About the only product that I have had bad experiences with is the canned sauerkraut. I am sure it was not actually bad, but I did not like the taste or texture of it and decided not to take any chances. Other than for the sauerkraut I have not seen any foods go bad as a result of their expiration date.

Certain foods should be checked at frequent intervals to ensure that they are still good for human consumption. These foods include not only the sauerkraut mentioned above, but also fruit, canned tomato sauce and paste as well as meat products. These types of products have been known to go bad even before the expiration date has elapsed.

Olives usually are supplied in glass jars, although you can often find some brands in cans. The olives which are purchased in the glass jars frequently remain tastier for a longer period of time than the ones in the cans. It goes without saying that the jars should be kept in a dark location prior to use. This is an excellent rule to follow regarding any products stored in glass jars. Naturally, not being equipped to determine nutritional values of the foods I cannot comment on whether the foods in the expired cans lose any value in this respect.

An interesting note on the life expectancy of canned foods is the tale of an old steamship which was raised from the depths of the Mississippi River. Upon salvaging the craft, it was discovered that there was an abundance of canned food aboard the ship. The canned foods were sent to a lab and properly analyzed. The results of these lab tests revealed that even though the food was over one hundred years old, it was still nutritious and contained no bacterial contaminants. Since no one actually tasted the food, no indication is provided as to the quality of taste involved.

In addition, the American military conducted several tests on new versus old medications. It was found that the older meds still retained as much potency as the new ones. The military readily admitted that the expiration date was placed on the meds for

various safety reasons and not necessarily because the product goes bad. The Wall Street Journal had stated in an article which they published that the various foods manufacturing companies place expiration dates on their supplies under the same reasoning as the medical manufactures do.

I have been storing food up for over several decades and these rules have worked successfully for me. Naturally, they may not necessarily work for you. In conclusion, you can enjoy your older canned foods, but I employ you to use the proper caution.