

Tuna Fish

Canned tuna is a great staple to keep in your pantry. Tuna offers many of the nutritional benefits of fresh fish, with lower cost and a long shelf life. Many cans now have a flip top for ease of opening without a can opener, and it also comes in pouches. Tuna is high in protein and contains heart healthy omega 3 fatty acids.

Purchasing: Tuna packed in water is much healthier than tuna packed in oil. When packed in water, tuna is naturally fat-free, but packing tuna in oil can add ten grams of fat. Like any other canned food, do not use any can that is severely dented, dented at the seam or rim, rusted, or bulging. There are 2 types of canned tuna: 'white' (albacore) and 'light', which is considered the healthier choice. Each of these comes as solid or chunk style. *White* tuna has a milder flavor and firmer texture, and tends to be more expensive. Some people prefer the flavor of white tuna. 'Light' tuna is simply tuna that isn't white. *Solid* pack means the tuna is in larger, firmer pieces with fewer flakes, while *chunk* tuna is in smaller pieces that vary in size. Many people find that they can't tell the difference between white and light tuna once mixed into a dish or salad.

Storage: Unopened cans should be kept in a clean, cool, dry place, off the floor. Opened tuna should be stored in a sealed, non-metallic container in the refrigerator and used within 3 days. It can also be frozen in an airtight container or bag.

Recipe Ideas: Try tuna in salads, sandwiches, casseroles, pasta or rice dishes, spaghetti sauce, and bean dishes. It can be eaten hot or cold. Most recipes that call for canned tuna can generally be made with canned chicken or salmon instead.

Nutrition Facts: Cans typically are 5 oz and contain 2 servings (about ¼ cup). A 2 oz drained portion of Chicken of the Sea chunk light tuna in water has 50 calories, no fat, no carbohydrate, 11 grams protein, and 180 mg of sodium.

Beware of pre-made tuna salad sandwiches. A 6-inch tuna salad sandwich from Subway has almost 500 calories and 25 grams of fat. See the recipe for a homemade tuna melt below for a healthier option that will still satisfy your sandwich cravings. You can make it in less time than you would spend ordering in Subway!

Tuna salad ideas: Mayonnaise or a combination of mayo with plain yogurt can be used. Add fruit like cut up grapes, apples, raisins or dried cranberries. Walnuts, almonds, pecans, or peanuts can add flavor and crunch. Try olives, shredded carrot, chopped celery, red onion, or chopped sweet pickles. Hard-boiled egg can be mashed in to lighten the texture.

Tuna Melt

- 2 (5 oz) cans of chunk light tuna, packed in water
- 8 slices bread, preferably whole wheat
- 4 slices of cheese
- ¼ c plain Greek yogurt
- 1 Tbsp mayonnaise
- 2 stalks celery, finely chopped
- Ground black pepper, to taste

Directions: Drain the tuna—open the can, but keep the lid in place. Press down on the lid and turn the can sideways over the sink until the water is mostly gone. Scoop tuna into a bowl, stir in the yogurt and mayonnaise and mash well with a fork.

If you have a toaster oven: Make an open-faced sandwich by topping four slices of bread with equal amounts of tuna, and spread it evenly over the bread. Top each with a slice of cheese. Place open-faced sandwich and plain piece of bread in toaster oven. Remove once it's toasted, and complete the sandwich by placing plain bread on top of open-faced half.

If you have a regular toaster and microwave oven: Toast the bread slices. Remove from toaster, and make an open-faced sandwich by topping four slices of bread with equal amounts of tuna, spreading it evenly over the bread. Top remaining four slices with cheese, and put those slices in microwave for thirty seconds, or until cheese is melted. Complete the sandwich by placing the bread and cheese over the tuna.

Lettuce and sliced tomato and fresh parsley make great additions. In a rush? Eat it cold!

Nutrition Facts: *Calories 270, Fat 7 gm, Sodium 580 gm, Sugar 4 gm, Carbohydrate 27gm, Fiber 2 gm, Protein 24 gm*
(To cut calories, carbs, and sodium, make this recipe open-faced using only 1 piece of bread).

See next page for more recipes, plus information about fish and mercury

Some Facts about Mercury in Seafood

Seafood is a delicious and healthy addition to your diet, but it is wise to be careful not to consume an excessive amount of mercury. Most seafood contains some mercury, which occurs naturally in the environment but also gets into water through pollution. Mercury builds up in fish who feed in those waters. When we eat the fish, we end up consuming the mercury as well. Albacore (white) tuna has 3 times as much mercury than light tuna because it comes from larger, older fish than light tuna, so the fish has had more time to accumulate mercury.

For most people, the risk from mercury in seafood is not a health concern. Pregnant women, women trying to become pregnant, and children should pay closer attention, because mercury can harm an unborn baby or young child's developing brain and nervous system. Fish containing the highest amounts of mercury are shark, swordfish, king mackerel, tilefish, orange roughy, grouper, and marlin.

Current EPA guidelines suggest that pregnant women, children and women trying to become pregnant should not eat any swordfish, shark, king mackerel, or tilefish, but can safely consume up to 12 ounces a week of seafood low in mercury such as salmon, cod or haddock, trout, tilapia, pollock, catfish, sardines, canned *light* tuna, scallops, and shrimp.

For the general adult population: Limit intake of the higher mercury fish to 1 per week, but eat other types of low mercury fish as desired.

Source: Nutrition Action Health Letter May 2008 and July/August 2013 and epi.publichealth.nc.gov website

Tuna Patties

(can substitute salmon for tuna)

Serves 6

[Source: Adapted from allrecipes.com](#)

- 3 (5 oz) cans tuna, drained
- 2 eggs, beaten
- 1 Tbsp olive or canola oil
- 1 yellow onion or 2 scallions, chopped
- 2 c bread crumbs, or crushed cracker crumbs, divided
- ½ tsp garlic powder
- 2 Tbsp lemon juice or ½ tsp lemon pepper
- Black pepper and fresh parsley and/or dill, to taste

Directions: Preheat oven to 375°F. In a medium bowl, mix together tuna, eggs, oil, onions or scallions, and 1 cup of the crumbs. Season with lemon juice or lemon pepper. Using your hands, form mixture into 12 patties. Spread remaining cup of crumbs over a plate or shallow dish. Coat patties with remaining crumbs by carefully placing them on crumbs in dish, and then flipping them over with your hand. Arrange patties in a single layer on a greased baking sheet OR in muffin tins. Bake 10-15 minutes in the preheated oven, turning once, or until golden brown on both sides. If preferred, pan-fry in oil instead of baking, by heating up enough oil to cover the bottom of a pan, and placing patties in pan, leaving room to flip. Let cook on medium heat for about three minutes, then flip. Flip again if needed, until both sides are brown.

Nutrition Facts: *Calories 280, Fat 6 gm, Saturated Fat 2 gm, Sodium 350 mg, Fiber 2 gm, Protein 25 gm*

Quick Tuna Casserole

Serves 6

[Source: USDA.gov SNAP-ED Connection](#)

- ½ of 1 lb pasta box (about 5 oz), preferably whole wheat
- 10 oz reduced sodium condensed cream of chicken or cream of mushroom soup
- ½ c milk (low-fat preferred)
- 1 (5 oz) can tuna, packed in water, drained
- 1 c frozen green peas (or substitute broccoli, or green beans, or spinach)
- ¼ c Italian bread crumbs
- Optional: ½ c canned chopped mushrooms or fresh
- Ground pepper to taste, about ½ tsp

Directions: Preheat oven to 350°F. Coat a 1-quart casserole dish with nonstick cooking spray. Cook pasta in boiling water for the time listed on package. Whisk the soup and milk together in a bowl. Add tuna and peas to milk/soup mixture. If too thick, add a little more water. Pour into casserole dish. Sprinkle top with bread crumbs. Bake for 30 minutes.

Nutrition Facts: *Calories 180, Fat 3 gm, Saturated Fat 1 gm, Sodium 410 mg, Carbohydrate 29 gm, Fiber 2 gm, Protein 12 gm*