



CAN-DO SITUATION

If you're looking for a heart-healthy, brain-boosting addition to your diet, tinned fish might be your perfect catch.

BY CHARIS TORRANCE

When it comes to maintaining a healthy diet, seafood ranks high on the list of recommended foods because of its nutritional value. But times are tough, and enjoying fresh seafood every day – or even just once a week – can be hard on your wallet. Tinned fish, on the other hand, is a great way to enjoy seafood on a budget. It offers a convenient, shelf-stable and affordable source of lean protein, and a wealth of health benefits. What you get with this seafood is much more than what's on the tin... but what's on the label is also pretty important. Trust us; keep reading.

Nutritional powerhouse



OMEGA-3 FATTY ACIDS

These essential fats are crucial for heart health, supporting brain function and reducing inflammation. Tinned fish, especially fatty fish like mackerel, salmon and sardines, is an excellent source of omega-3s.



PROTEIN

Tinned fish is a great source of high-quality protein, which is vital for muscle repair, immune function and energy production. It provides all the essential amino acids your body needs.



VITAMINS AND MINERALS

Tinned fish contains vitamins B₁₂ and D, and minerals such as calcium, iodine and selenium. Vitamin B₁₂ supports nerve function and red blood cell production, and vitamin D is crucial for bone health. Calcium is essential for strong bones and teeth, and iodine and selenium play important roles in thyroid function.



LOW IN SATURATED FAT

Tinned fish tends to be low in saturated fat, making it a more heart-healthy source of protein than red meat.

Convenience and a long shelf life

One of the significant advantages of tinned fish is its convenience. It is ready to eat straight out of the tin, no cooking required. This makes it a great choice for quick meals and snacks.

Tinned fish has a long shelf life; in fact, it will keep several years if stored properly.

Cost-effectiveness

Tinned fish is generally much more affordable than fresh fish. It offers a cost-effective way to enjoy the nutritional benefits of seafood.

Sustainability

Did you know that tinned fish is among the lowest-carbon animal proteins available? It requires less energy for transportation and refrigeration than fresh fish, and thanks to its long shelf life there is little spoilage and waste. And the aluminium tins are 100% recyclable. All of this adds to the potential to curb the world's enormous greenhouse gas emissions from food production.

Health benefits

1 HEART HEALTH

Omega-3 fatty acids found in tinned fish play a crucial role in heart health. According to a study published in the journal *Circulation*, omega-3 fatty acids help to lower triglycerides (a fat found in blood that may contribute to hardening of the arteries), reduce blood pressure, and prevent arrhythmia (an abnormality in the timing or pattern of the heartbeat). Another study, published in *The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, showed that regular consumption of omega-3-rich fish could significantly decrease the risk of heart disease and stroke. These fatty acids reduce inflammation and improve vascular function.

2 BRAIN FUNCTION

Omega-3 fatty acids, docosahexaenoic acid (DHA) in particular, are essential for brain health. A study published in *Neurology* found that higher

levels of DHA were associated with better cognitive function and a lower risk of Alzheimer's disease.

Additionally, omega-3s have been shown to support mental health by reducing symptoms of depression and anxiety. Research published in *Translational Psychiatry* indicated that omega-3 supplementation might have therapeutic effects on mood disorders.

3 BONE HEALTH

Tinned fish, especially varieties with edible bones such as salmon and sardines, is rich in calcium and vitamin D. Calcium is vital for maintaining strong bones, and vitamin D enhances calcium absorption and bone mineralisation.

4 WEIGHT MANAGEMENT

High in protein and healthy fats, tinned fish can aid weight management by promoting satiety and reducing overall calorie intake. Research published in *The Journal of Nutrition* found that diets higher in protein helped to control appetite and increase feelings of fullness. Moreover, the healthy fats in tinned fish provide sustained energy and prevent overeating.

5 IMMUNE SUPPORT

The vitamins and minerals in tinned fish, such as vitamin D and selenium, play important roles in supporting the immune system. Vitamin D has been shown to modulate the immune response and enhance the body's ability to fight off infections. Selenium, a powerful antioxidant found in many types of fish, helps to protect cells from oxidative damage and supports immune function. ❖



Best types of of tinned fish

- **SALMON** is rich in omega-3 fatty acids, high-quality protein, and vitamins D and B₁₂. Opt for wild-caught salmon for the best nutritional profile.
- **SARDINES** are packed with omega-3s, calcium (if you eat the bones) and vitamin D. Look for sustainably caught sardines.
- **MACKEREL** is high in omega-3 fatty acids and protein, and is a good source of selenium and vitamin B₁₂.
- **TUNA** is high in protein and omega-3 fatty acids. Choose light tuna varieties to reduce exposure to mercury.
- **ANCHOVIES** are high in omega-3 fatty acids, calcium and iron. They are a handy ingredient to have in your pantry for preparing flavourful dishes such as Caesar salad and pasta sauces.
- **HERRING** is high in omega-3 fatty acids, vitamin D and selenium. It is known for its rich taste and versatility in recipes.

NOTE: To make the most sustainable seafood choices, read labels and always refer to updated resources such as the WWF-SASSI list (wwfsassi.co.za/sassi-list).