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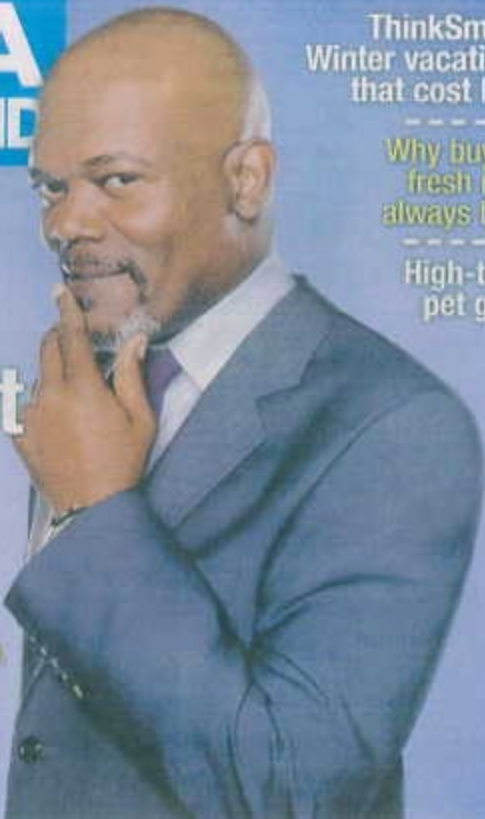
“The
greatest
thing
that ever
happened
to me”

For Samuel L. Jackson,
it wasn't becoming one
of the highest-grossing
movie stars of all time.
It was accepting help
from others.

ThinkSmart:
Winter vacations
that cost less

Why buying
fresh isn't
always best

High-tech
pet gear



I F WE'VE HEARD it once, we've heard it a million

times: **Fresher is better.** But it isn't the only option. Nutritionists actually don't favor frozen foods and canned vegetables of worse products. Here, a review of the items you can enjoy just as much or almost as much from outside the produce aisle.

■ FROZEN VEGGIES

Freeze "foods that are difficult to find in a fresh state, like mushrooms, art chives, whole cooked fennel or frozen spinach," says Jackie Kelller, the founding director of health-food company Nutri-Fit. "They are nutritionally equivalent and generally have an sodium added in the freezing process, unlike their canned cousins."

Cons: "Vitamins are susceptible to temperature changes," says David R. Wallace, assistant professor of foods and nutrition at Adelphi University in Ohio. "The more processing that takes place, generally the greater negative impact it has on water-soluble vitamins."

Verdict: Edamame, peas, beans, corn and spinach are great froms. Many other veggies, however, fare worse. "As plant cells freeze, they burst or split open," says Steven Adams, author of *The Culprit and The Cure*. "The taste is similar, but the texture is different. Fresh frozen vegetables are generally tastier and have a better texture than frozen."

■ FROZEN FRUITS

Pros: "Because they contain few fresh fruits, nutrient content is better in," says nutrition expert Ann Kohls, M.D., author of *The Amino Diet*. "Frozen fruits are at times even better than fresh because they're picked at the peak of flavor and nutrient content, and they don't degrade on their way to the store. And frozen fruits often are less expensive than fresh ones."

Cons: "They get more watery," Kelller says. "Bananas, which freeze and defrost, lose texture quickly." That means they're not as good as fresh berries when eaten out of hand.

Verdict: When they're incorporated into smoothies or baked goods or cooked down into sauces, frozen strawberries, blueberries, raspberries, rhubarb, cranberries and pineapple are great options all year long.

Fruits are great for cooking into smoothies or baked goods.



Some frozen vegetables (above) others should be eaten in just of their fresh freshness.

WHEN FRESH ISN'T BEST

Turns out, canned and frozen foods aren't so bad after all.

BY NATALIE BRIMMANN KUBSKE

■ CANNED FISH

Pros: It's convenient, has a long shelf life and is affordable. "It's a huge tin of canned fish," Kelller says, "especially salmon and sardines. They are among the best sources of important omega-3 fats and are low in carbohydrates." In fact, canned salmon provides more calcium than fresh. The heating and canning process softens bones, making calcium more available for use by the body, Adams says.

Cons: "The sodium content of these fish, in addition to the added sodium if they are canned in oil, are the two biggest detractors here," Kelller says.

Verdict: "Americans do not eat enough fish," says John Mink, dean, professor of family medicine and nutritional sciences at the College of St. California in St. Paul. "The easiest fish is an economical way to help increase that level."

■ CANNED VEGGIES

Pros: "The convenience, often and long shelf life. Canned veggies are never out of season and, glass, can be better for you."

Cons: Frozen spinach. Canning produces less iron, says its obesity (think of the size of a can of green beans).

Verdict: Olives, onions, roasted red peppers, artichokes and beans are great options. Plus, the olive time settings, for example, not having to steam and prep fresh vegetables can't be beat. "There is some nutrient loss over fresh or frozen (in most vegetables), but they offer far more nutrients than emitting their fresh alternatives," Adams says. Just use them to their best advantage: Roasted red peppers would make a nice addition to a fresh green salad, but in a pasta sauce or as a topping for bruschetta, the can really shine.

■ CANNED MEAT

Pros: It's cheap, convenient and long-lasting. Cons: Most options slip away from normal meat other than beefed and chicken. They can be high in sodium, often have MSG, and the sodium usually doesn't remain fresh. Plus, you usually have to cook what you've got. "Canned meats are certainly meat products," Adams says.

Verdict: Canned pork can be OK (as in chicken salad sandwich), but try to avoid other "products."

■ CANNED FRUITS

Pros: The convenience and availability. And the taste for many can fillings.

Cons: They usually use loads with added sugar and often artificial, which detracts from their fruit content. Avoid the ones the are marked as "juicy," Kelller says, because of the sodium issue.

Verdict: This is a personal preference—good if you don't mind the added sugar and often artificial. If you want something, though, water-packed pineapple is one of the few fruits from a can that are tolerable. **B**



Canned salmon is a very best source of omega-3 fats.