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Extension Spotlight: Transforming tuna into quick and healthy meals

MANDY HATFIELD For The News-Review Oct 24, 2017 1



Canned tuna isn't just for sandwiches, appetizers and casseroles. To switch things up, try alternating with Cilantro Lime Tuna Wrap. Photo courtesy of Foodhero.org

Cilantro Lime Tuna Wrap

Ingredients
3 Tablespoons lime juice
2 Tablespoons mayonnaise
2 cans (5 ounces each) tuna in water, drained
2/3 cup cilantro, chopped and loosely packed
2 green onions or 1/2 teaspoon onion powder
1 cup red bell pepper, diced
1 jalapeno, minced (ribs and seeds removed)
5 medium flour tortillas
1 cup shredded lettuce or 5 small lettuce leaves

Directions
Mix lime juice and mayonnaise together in a small bowl. Add tuna, cilantro, onions and peppers and mix until evenly coated.
Divide tuna mixture to edges.
Top with lettuce and fold or roll into a wrap.
Refrigerate leftovers within 2 hours.
Note: No peppers? Use 1 cup diced celery and 1/4 cup canned green chilis.

Stove Top Tuna Casserole

Ingredients
1/8 teaspoon pepper
1 can (5 ounces) tuna in water, drained
1 teaspoon chicken bouillon
1 can (10.5 ounces) low sodium condensed cream of chicken soup
8 ounces egg noodles (4 1/2 cups dry)
2 cups frozen peas
1/2 teaspoon onion powder
1 Tablespoon prepared mustard
1/3 cup nonfat or 1% milk

Directions
Cook noodles using package directions. Add peas for last three minutes. Drain.
Mix remaining ingredients in a small bowl. Add to drained noodles, and stir well.
Cook on low heat, stirring often, until heated through. Serve warm.
Refrigerate leftovers within 2 hours.

Notes
Cream of Mushroom or Cream of Chicken Mushroom soup can be substituted for Cream of Chicken.
Try whole wheat egg noodles.
Reheat the casserole in the microwave if it has cooled before serving.

Tuna Pasta Salad

Ingredients
2 cups macaroni, uncooked
2 cans (5 ounces each) tuna or salmon in water
1/2 cup chopped zucchini (about 1/3 small zucchini)
1/4 cup sliced carrots (about 1 carrot)
1/3 cup diced onion
1/4 cup mayonnaise or salad dressing

Directions
Cook macaroni according to package directions. Drain the cooking liquid and cool.
Drain tuna or salmon.
Mix all ingredients together in a bowl. Chill until ready to serve.
Refrigerate leftovers within 2 hours.

When thinking about a quick dinner for tonight, I thought about tuna. Tuna is a quick, inexpensive protein that can be used in so many ways. All fresh fish cooks quickly, and canned tuna is even easier because you just need to pop open a can. Tuna doesn't have to be just used in tuna sandwiches or as tuna casserole. I enjoy tuna burgers or tuna tacos, too.

Fish is a great addition to anyone's diet. The dietary guidelines recommend eating seafood twice a week because of its many benefits. Eating about 8 ounces will help you meet this recommendation. When seafood has been consumed at this level regularly, it can help prevent heart disease, according to the Dietary Guidelines.

White or albacore tuna is high in Omega-3 fatty acids, which for infants and children can help with nervous system development. Pregnant women should limit their albacore and white tuna consumption to no more than 6 ounces a week due to mercury levels, but light tuna is known for being low in mercury, so you could consume 12 ounces per week.

If you get the opportunity to buy fresh tuna from the coast, I say definitely give it a try. It is great on the grill, and you can buy it around \$3.25 a pound. The albacore tuna caught off the Oregon coast are smaller usually about 10 to 30 pounds in size and have lower levels of mercury.

Ever wondered what type of tuna to expect in canned tuna? Here's what the label can tell you:
Light tuna — Tan to tan-pink flesh. Has a softer texture and stronger flavor than albacore tuna.

White or albacore tuna — White to light pink flesh. Has a firm texture and mild flavor.

Solid — Large, whole pieces of fish.

Chunk — Smaller pieces of fish. Might look shredded. Usually costs the least.

Water pack — Water or broth added to the can for processing. Fewer calories even when drained. Pouches contain less added liquid than cans.



Oil pack — Vegetable oil or canola oil added to the can for processing. More calories even when drained. Some Omega-3 fats may be lost when drained. Pouches contain less added liquid than cans.

This information can be found in Foodhero.org Tuna monthly newsletter.

If you have always loved tuna casserole, but it takes too long to cook, or it's not as healthy as you would like it to be, I have included a recipe for a quick stove top tuna casserole that can be made in about 15 minutes. Equally as quick to make are cilantro lime tuna wraps.

Canned tuna is great to have in your pantry on hand for those nights you think, "I just don't have time for a healthy meal," because tuna can always provide that quick, healthy protein to your family's favorite meal. Try substituting tuna in a meal, or try one of the recipes included from Foodhero.org.



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