

Shoppers saying no to canned food

By Vanessa Wong, Bloomberg

Maybe canned foods remind us of school lunches. Or power outages. Or Y2K paranoia. Or cuisine from the '50s. Perhaps it's concern about BPA. Maybe the home canning trend keeps consumers from the supermarket. Because sales of preserved foods in the U.S. are fading.

Except during the recession, when consumers sought less expensive groceries, retail sales of canned, jarred, and otherwise preserved foods have been in decline. Ready meals such as canned stew, fruit, and seafood saw the steepest drops since 2003, according to researcher Euromonitor International.

Last year, volume sales of canned and preserved foods dropped by 1 percent, and Euromonitor estimates that by 2017, retail sales will be down 5 percent from 2012 levels, to 5 million tonnes.

Sure, they're affordable and can reduce food waste. But, as the firm explains in a report, because these products can be kept on shelves for years and can contain high levels of sodium, they are perceived to be less fresh and less healthy than even frozen and chilled foods. As the economy recovers, consumers are gradually trading back up. "Given the current health and wellness mind set of Americans, they are trying to avoid canned/preserved food if they can afford to do so," Euromonitor writes. (This obsession with freshness doesn't seem to be stopping people from hoarding Twinkies.)

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