

PENNY SAVER NEWS

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A local resident recently asked about why sometimes she'd find pink meat in what was supposed to be a can of 'Solid White' tuna. One can she opened had such a strong odor that she threw it away. Her question was "Is this really tuna, or have they put something else in the can?"

It's illegal to put any other kind of fish in there if the can says 'tuna'. And since this was a major brand-name product, it is very unlikely that there was any other fish in the can. With small brands or imported products there would be a chance of that, but the Federal Trade Commission would crack down on a US company that tried to substitute.

Some electronic searching and messaging got a quick response from the manufacturer. Tuna as well as some other deep sea fish, and even poultry, have multicolored meat. We all know chicken has both dark meat and white meat. Striped bass for example have a line of dark meat down their sides. Tuna have a section of pink flesh under the loin area of the fish. While the darker or pinker meat is completely edible, it often has a stronger flavor and odor due to a higher oil content. Usually this dark or pink meat is trimmed away before the fish is canned. We've gotten so used to white or pale tuna fish that pink tuna makes us wonder what's up! In this case, the manufacturer apologized that their Quality Control team did not see that the fish was not properly trimmed. But the meat was perfectly safe and healthy to eat.

The pink flesh in the can was probably the reason why one of the cans had a strong fishy smell too. While we might not like the taste quite as much, since that darker meat usually has more oil it's probably healthier. Fish oil, especially from deep sea, cold water fish, has those healthy omega-3 fats that are so good for our hearts. If we ate the pink tuna or the dark stripe on the sea bass we'd probably get more of the good fats.

The other question the caller had was "Why is there soy in this tuna?" It said it was packed in water, so it should not have been soy oil in there. Where was the soy? Again, the manufacturer explained. They pack their tuna in vegetable broth, and soy beans are one of the vegetables they use to make the broth. Using vegetable broth improves the flavor of the tuna and helps to reduce the 'fishiness'.

The broth probably also helps the texture or firmness of the meat in the can. If the fish were packed just in plain water, after the long cooking and longer storage of the cans the meat would probably be mushy and soft. But using broth that has some soy protein in it would help keep the water out of the meat.

Using broth instead of oil should help keep the healthy omega-3 fats in the fish too. If it were packed in oil they could dissolve out. Then if we throw away the oil in the can we'd lose some of the omega-3s too. Generally fish packed in water is recommended because there's less fat and therefore fewer calories in each serving. But if you prefer the fish in oil, use the oil too, to get the full health benefits.

Here's a creamy tuna noodle casserole that's so much healthier than the soup-can version. Give it a try for dinner, with a green salad you're ready to go.

Tuna Pasta Dinner Dish

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| 4 cups cooked spaghetti | 1 tsp canola oil |
| 1 small onion, chopped | 1 clove garlic, chopped |
| 1 6-oz can tuna in water, drained | ½ cup chopped carrot |
| ½ cup chopped green pepper | ¼ cup snipped parsley |
| ¼ tsp paprika | 1 cup fat free cottage cheese |
| ½ cup fat free sour cream | ½ cup fat free yogurt |
| ½ cup toasted bread crumbs | ¼ cup grated Parmesan cheese |

Preheat oven to 350°F. Spray 9X11 inch baking dish with cooking spray.

Heat oil in nonstick skillet. Cook onion and garlic 2-3 minutes until tender. Put in large bowl. Add tuna and vegetables to onion along with paprika and mix. Combine cheese, sour cream and yogurt in small bowl. Stir into tuna mixture. Transfer to baking dish.

Combine bread crumbs and Parmesan cheese, sprinkle over tuna mixture. Bake 30 to 45 minutes, until golden brown. Serves 6.