Can

Categories: Objects

A Yiddish loanword of Slavic origin, meaning a can. In the ghetto, puschke denoted tinned meat or a meat can. Apart from fresh meat, the Provisioning Department received from the ghetto administration also tinned meat that was rationed to the inhabitants of the ghetto. This happened mainly in the periods of food shortage. Usually, half a can of meat was given to one person; this equalled 42 out of 84 decagrams net weight, or 1 kilogram gross weight per a can. Tinned meat was more often given to the coupon holders. There were two kinds of tinned meat available, specifically in “R” [Rindfleisch] cans (beef) and “S” [Schweinefleisch] tins (pork). In both cases, it was derived from canned meat from a butcher. In March 1944, there were over 200,000 cans in the ghetto which were consumed by the end of May. Some cans were sold on black market or through illegal trade. The tinned meat prices increased along with bread prices, reaching 1,000 Mk for one “R” tin, whereas an “S” tin was priced 25% higher as it contained more fat.

Tinned meat remained a luxury product at all times, while throughout the existence of the ghetto, beginning with autumn 1941, bread prices were points of reference for all other food products. In the lack of china and glass containers, tins were also used in their place in households. Many people used empty cans to plant vegetables and flowers as decoration, put onto window sills and giving the flats a pleasant appearance in spite of the ubiquitous poverty, hunger and diseases.

Oskar Rosenfeld

Resources

Encyclopedia, s. 169.

Tags

provisions everyday life

Updated: 07-11-2026

Added: 12-08-2023