



**SUPPLY
LINE**

Lifeboat Ration Tin

This tin and the food it contained were part of emergency supplies carried on lifeboats and life rafts. The supplies were meant to help sailors if their ship was sunk by the enemy or lost in an accident. The box of emergency supplies also included drinking water.

Original



Lifeboat Ration Tin © Canadian War Museum

Dangerous Oceans

During the Second World War, the Battle of the Atlantic pitted the Royal Canadian Navy and other Allied forces against the enemy. The main threat was German submarines, known as U-boats, but in some areas German warships and aircraft also attacked, sinking military and merchant ships, sometimes without warning. Ships could also sink because of accidents or bad weather.

If a ship was sinking, the crew could use lifeboats and life rafts to escape. These could contain safety equipment such as flares and emergency radios, along with oars and paddles. The crew could not always make it to safety, however, especially if their ship sank quickly.

Lifeboat Rations

Lifeboats and life rafts also carried emergency rations, sealed into large metal boxes to protect them. Each large box had enough supplies for one person for eight days, or eight people for one day. They also contained water, along with chewing gum and malted milk tablets.

The large boxes also held smaller “Food Container” tins like the one in the Discovery Box. The biscuit ration package contained 12 chocolate biscuits made with soybean flour. The 12 circular milk-chocolate tablets were made of dried whole milk, with chocolate added for flavour.

The tin included in the Discovery Box is an original wartime food container, and the rations it contains are original wartime foods. The tin has been opened, divided in two and filled with resin so you can see its contents.

When used according to instructions, the rations provided about 750 calories per day. They were meant to keep up **morale** for a few days, rather than for longer use. In the North Atlantic, where many Royal Canadian Navy ships operated, harsh weather made long-term survival unlikely.

Vocabulary

Morale:

The confidence and enthusiasm of a person or group of people, especially in difficult or dangerous situations.

Did You Know?

The chocolate in the small chocolate bars was made to withstand temperatures of 100 °C – the boiling point of water! This ensured that it would not melt when the container was sterilized during the manufacturing process.