

SENIOR NUTRITION NEWS

Eat Smart Idaho

November 2023

Keep Thanksgiving Leftovers Safe

After a Thanksgiving meal there is often leftover food. Follow these food safety tips to keep your favorite leftovers safe and avoid foodborne illness:



- **Use the Two-Hour Rule:** Refrigerate perishable items within two hours of coming out of the oven or refrigerator. When food is left out at room temperature it is in the "Danger Zone" (between temperatures of 40°F and 140°F). This is the temperature range where bacteria multiplies quickly and can cause food to become unsafe. Throw out perishable food if it is left out for longer than two hours.
- **Use Shallow Containers:** When preparing Thanksgiving foods for storage place them in smaller portions in shallow containers. Using shallow containers will help keep them safe by cooling them faster in the refrigerator.
- **Freeze or Consume Within Four Days:** Use the Monday after Thanksgiving as a reminder that it is the last day you can safely eat leftovers. If you want to keep leftovers longer, freeze them within that four-day period. Frozen food stays safe indefinitely, though the quality may decrease over time (best quality with frozen food is if it is eaten within six months).
- **Reheat to 165°F:** Make sure your reheated leftovers reach 165°F as measured with a food thermometer. Reheat sauces, soups and gravies safely by bringing them to a rolling boil.
- **Microwave Food Safely:** When reheating, cover and rotate the food for even heating. Arrange food items evenly in a covered microwave safe glass or ceramic dish and add some liquid, if needed. Check the internal temperature of the food in several places with a food thermometer after allowing a resting or standing time of 3 minutes. The resting or standing time is letting the food sit after the microwaving is done. This helps complete the cooking process.



Thanksgiving Dinner Remade



Not sure what to do with your leftovers? Try these quick and easy leftover ideas:

Cranberry smoothies: Blend cranberries, frozen low-fat yogurt and orange juice.

Crunchy turkey salad: Toss cubed turkey with celery, apples, and light mayo with shredded spinach.

Stuffing frittata: Mix stuffing with egg and cook thoroughly, pancake-style.

Turkey berry wrap: Wrap sliced turkey, spread with cranberry sauce and shredded greens in a whole wheat tortilla.

Thanksgiving Casserole: Layer your leftovers (stuffing, turkey, green beans, mashed potatoes, gravy, and anything else) into a baking pan, bake, and enjoy!

Turkey Enchiladas/Fajitas/Tacos: Fill tortillas up with shredded turkey instead of chicken and add cheese and any other leftovers you think would be good in there!

Turkey Stuffed Bell Peppers: stuff your favorite color bell pepper with turkey, mashed potatoes, green beans, stuffing and shredded cheese.

Turkey Soup: Add turkey or other leftover vegetables to your favorite soup.

For Information on Eat Smart Idaho classes, contact the Nutrition Instructor in your county:

Panhandle: Benewah, Bonner, Boundary,
Kootenai & Shoshone Counties 208-292-2525

North Central Idaho: Clearwater, Idaho, Latah,
Lewis, & Nez Perce Counties 208-883-2267



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Sources: <https://www.usda.gov/media/blog/2021/11/22/leftovers-lets-keep-best-part-thanksgiving-safe>; <https://food.unl.edu/article/microwave-safety>; <https://uwyoextension.org/uwnutrition/newsletters/10-ways-to-turn-your-thanksgiving-leftovers-into-planned-overs/>; <https://www.eatright.org/food/cultural-cuisines-and-traditions/holidays-and-celebrations/reinventing-thanksgiving> retrieved 10/26/23

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