



Turkey Basics: Store Those Turkey Leftovers Safely

After going to all the work to prepare your turkey dinner, be sure to store any food that is not eaten as soon as possible. There's nothing better than turkey leftovers, so keep them safe. Here are a few tips for saving, reheating, and storing those leftovers.

Save Those Leftovers — Safely!

- Perishable food should not be left out of the refrigerator at room temperature for more than 2 hours. Refrigerate or freeze leftover food as soon as possible after your meal — always within 2 hours.
- Remove all stuffing from the turkey cavity before refrigerating.
- Cut the turkey off the bone and refrigerate. Slice breast meat; legs and wings may be left whole.
- Refrigerate your side dishes, too. Putting these foods in shallow containers will help them to cool off more quickly.

Reheating?

- Reheat all leftovers thoroughly to 165°F or until hot and steaming. Bring gravy to a rolling boil.

If reheating in a microwave oven:

- Cover food and rotate the dish so it heats evenly. Follow the microwave manufacturer's instructions.
- Inadequate heating in either the microwave or conventional oven can contribute to foodborne illness.



Storage of Leftovers

Refrigerator — 40° F or slightly below

Cooked turkey—3 to 4 days
Stuffing and gravy—1 to 2 days
Other cooked dishes—3 to 4 days

Freezer — 0° F or below

Turkey slices/pieces:

Plain —4 mos.

Turkey covered with
broth or gravy —6 mos.

Cooked poultry dishes —4 to 6 mos.
Stuffing and gravy —1 mo.

Foods frozen longer remain safe but may
become drier and lose flavor

Source: Consumer Information from USDA, Food Safety and Inspection Service, Food Safety Education and Communications Staff, 202-720-7943; fax 202-720-99063.

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