The Low Down on Leftovers

Leftovers can be a great way to save money, use all of the food you buy, and eat healthy meals. Making simple changes in how you plan your meals and store your food can help. Make leftovers a great addition to weekly meals.

**Change: How you Plan your Meals**

It can be very difficult to plan and shop for meals to feed just one or two people. The following tips will give you some ideas for your leftover ingredients and how you can use the ingredients in your next meal.

**If you have leftover whole grains…**
(such as brown rice, quinoa, millet, barley)
- Make a vegetable casserole
- Use as a breakfast grain
- Top on your salad
- Add to soup
- Make a rice salad with a variety of vegetables and your favorite vinaigrette dressing
- Use in a stir-fry with vegetables

**If you have leftover cooked vegetables…**
- Make a breakfast omelet or add as a side dish to eggs
- Add to a sandwich or wrap
- Use in a stir-fry

**If you have leftover lean ground meat…**
- Try stuffed peppers
- Make meatballs or burgers
- Try in a pasta sauce

**If you have leftover baked chicken…**
- Add to soup or a green salad
- Add to a stir-fry
- Make a casserole dish
- Use in quesadillas, tacos, burritos, or wraps
- Make chicken salad
- Make a sandwich
- Add to pizza

**If you have leftover pasta…**
- Make a cold pasta salad
- Add pasta to a soup or salad

**If you have leftover beans…**
- Add to soup or a green salad
- Add to a corn tortilla with eggs
- Add to quesadillas, tacos, burritos, or wraps
- Mash and use as a dip
- Use in a stir-fry

**BE CREATIVE**… The easiest way to use up leftovers is to throw out the rules! You may be surprised with what you create.
Change: How you Store your Food

Leftover cooked food is safe to fully reheat 1-2 days after the meal is made. Freezing meals or ingredients is another option. Before you freeze any food ingredients or prepared dish that you want to save to eat later, ask yourself these questions:

Is this a food or dish that will freeze well?

While most foods freeze well, there are a few that do not. The following DO NOT freeze well:
- Cabbage, celery, cucumber, leafy greens, parsley, radishes (unless part of a soup or cooked mixed dish)
- Cooked macaroni and spaghetti
- Potatoes, baked or boiled
- Eggs in shell (egg beaters can be frozen)
- Unopened canned food
- Sour cream, cheese or milk products
- Mayonnaise or salad dressing
- Gelatin/Fruit jelly
- Fried foods

How long can this food or dish be frozen?

When food is stored in the freezer it will always be safe because bacteria will stop growing. These recommendations are for the quality and taste of your food.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Food Item</th>
<th>Maximum Duration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poultry, uncooked</td>
<td>6 to 9 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poultry, cooked</td>
<td>4 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fish, uncooked</td>
<td>3 to 6 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ground meat, uncooked</td>
<td>3 to 4 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ground meat, cooked</td>
<td>2 to 3 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egg whites or egg substitutes (in carton)</td>
<td>12 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frozen dinners or entrees</td>
<td>3 to 4 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fruits &amp; vegetables</td>
<td>8 to 12 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soups and stews</td>
<td>2 to 3 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casserole</td>
<td>2 to 3 months</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Leftover Facts

1. Freeze your food or dishes in small portions. Smaller portions are easier to fit in your freezer and warm up much quicker.
2. Many soups freeze very well.
3. The safest ways to thaw food are by refrigerating it, running cold water over it, or in the microwave.
4. Freeze leftovers within 3-4 days.
5. Freeze foods in flexible freezer bags, plastic containers, or aluminum foil (for non liquids).
6. If your freezer breaks, food inside will keep for about 2 days if the door is not opened. After that, food must be thrown away.
7. Date and label everything you freeze.

This material was funded by USDA's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program – SNAP. The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) provides nutrition assistance to people with low incomes. It can help you buy nutritious foods for a better diet. To find out more, contact your local DHS office, or call the URI SNAP-Ed nutrition program at 1-877-Food-URI (1-877-366-3874). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.