

Limits to Leftovers



Americans are economizing and stretching every dollar. As many consumers make their dollar go farther by preparing more meals at home and saving leftovers, it is essential they follow safe food handling practices. This includes discarding refrigerated leftover food within 3 to 4 days.

FIGHT BAC

When heating & storing leftovers

- o Always wash hands with warm water and soap for 20 seconds before and after handling food.
- o Temperatures between 40° F and 140° F allow bacteria to grow rapidly. Refrigerate cooked leftovers promptly - within 2 hours; 1 hour when the temperatures are over 90° F. Use an appliance thermometer to ensure that your refrigerator is at 40° F or below.
- o Divide leftovers into smaller portions and store in shallow containers in the refrigerator. Hot food can be placed directly in the refrigerator.
- o Leftovers should be reheated to an internal temperature of at least 165° F. Use a food thermometer to check the internal temperature. Sauces, soups, and gravies should be reheated by bringing them to a boil.
- o When microwaving leftovers, make sure there are no cold spots in food (where bacteria can survive). Cover food, stir and rotate for even cooking. If there is no turntable, rotate the dish by hand once or twice during cooking.



Buying food in bulk can be a money-saver. Remember, whatever the quantity of food - safe handling is a must! Large packages of perishables like raw ground meat and poultry products can be refrigerated for 1-2 days, but then the food should be cooked or put in the freezer.



Temperature and time cause bacteria to grow which is why it is so important your refrigerator be cold enough and you not keep leftovers too long.

There is a limit to how long food can be safely kept!



FIGHT BAC

Clean, Separate, Cook and Chill

Clean

Wash hands and surfaces often.

Separate

Don't cross-contaminate!

Cook

Cook to proper temperatures.

Chill

Refrigerate promptly!

The Partnership for Food Safety Education saves lives and improves public health through research-based, actionable consumer food safety initiatives that reduce food-borne illness.