

**PENNY SAVER NEWS**

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Happy Thanksgiving!

The big day is here! Hopefully you are surrounded by family and friends, giving thanks for the food, the family, and the freedom to share them! Now please, don't sit there stuffed while you let the turkey, stuffing and all the other goodies cool on the counter. If you hope to make use of those delicious leftovers tomorrow or later, they need to be in the refrigerator, staying safe.

How long can you let them sit? Just 2 hours! Any meat - turkey, ham or other - and all the side dishes, from stuffing and gravy to green beans or pumpkin pie, need to be refrigerated within 2 hours of coming out of the oven or off the stove. Thank goodness it's not been 90°F recently, because when the temperature's over 90° that safe time on the table shrinks to just 1 hour. This is because bacteria like warm places. The warmer it is the faster they will grow, and the less time it will take to make someone sick. So we need to get the food cold fast. If things sit out for more than 2 hours, they should be discarded not saved. They're too risky.

When you're refrigerating leftovers, use shallow dishes or plastic containers not more than 3 inches deep. It takes too long to get food cold in the center of a deep pan. Empty out the refrigerator in advance of the big dinner, so you have space for everything. Don't stack several warm containers on top of each other. The top and bottom ones will insulate the middle one. If you must stack them, keep spaces between them and put the upper one over the space between the two lower ones. Refrigerated turkey, stuffing and gravy should be used within 3 to 4 days. Of course they can be

recycled into chili, soups, sandwiches or potpies in that time. Recooked dishes like that should be used by the second day, especially if they have a gravy or cream sauce. Put a date on containers to help you remember when they should be used.

You also want to pack leftovers for freezing in thin or shallow containers. Slice the meat and lay several slices in one freezer bag or container. Gravy and stuffing should not be frozen. If they are not used by the 4<sup>th</sup> day, discard them. Divide leftover side dishes into meal-sized containers. That way you'll be able to thaw one meal at a time later. Be sure to cool or chill food going into the freezer. Too much hot food going in at once will warm the rest of the food. It will cause more freezer burn in those foods. And if the food doesn't get cold fast enough it can spoil. Bacteria will grow slowly until they get too cold. As soon as that food is thawed, they'll start to grow again. You could end up with food poisoning months later because of mistakes made much earlier.

You can reheat leftover turkey in the oven or the microwave. The oven will do a better job of killing any bacteria that might have grown even though it might take a little longer. Set the oven for 325°F. Add a little water or broth to the pan or oven-proof dish with the turkey, cover it, and heat until your new food thermometer reads 165°F in the middle of the thickest part of the food.

If you reheat in the microwave use safe heating procedures. Use a container intended for microwave cooking, not a reused plastic carton. Add a little water or broth to make steam. Use a cover on the plate or dish. If your microwave doesn't have a turntable be sure to rotate the dish several times while it's heating. Check the temperature to be sure it reaches 165°F. And leave the covered dish sit for 3 to 5 minutes to allow the heat to even out in all parts of the food.

If you're not ready for another cold turkey sandwich, here's a slightly different way to use some of those leftovers. It works best if you made rice dressing, but even a bread stuffing is tasty. Add seasonings that your family enjoys. If you like Mexican food, use a can of tomatoes with onion and chilies. And don't forget to give thanks!

#### Day After Turkey Soup

2 cups chopped cooked turkey or chicken	2 cups leftover dressing
2 14-oz cans chicken broth	2 cans chopped or diced tomatoes
1 medium onion, diced	½ cup chopped bell pepper
1 Tbsp oil	2 cups leftover cooked vegetables

Seasonings to taste (cumin and cilantro for Mexican, basil and oregano for Italian, etc)

Heat oil in large pot. Sauté onion and bell pepper until tender. Add broth and tomatoes, heat to boiling. Add chopped turkey and reheat. Stir in vegetables and dressing.

Simmer gently while adjusting seasonings to taste. Serve with rolls or biscuits. Serves 4-5.