



Handling Leftovers Safely

TWO-HOUR RULE:

Discard all perishable foods left out at room temperature for more than 2 hours total time. Discard after 1 hour if the temperature is above 90°F.



Chilling and Storing Leftovers

- Store in the refrigerator at 40°F or below.
- Use a refrigerator thermometer to make sure your appliance is at the right temperature in the warmest part.
- Divide leftovers into shallow containers for quicker cooling or,
- Cool pots of soups or stews in an ice water bath and stir to cool quickly before refrigeration.
- Slice roast beef, ham, and turkey and place in shallow containers for storage.
- Bring leftovers from restaurants home immediately; remember the two-hour rule. All the time the food sat out at the restaurant and spent on the trip home counts toward the two hours allowed.
- If you plan to bring leftovers home from a restaurant, put a cooler in the car ahead of time.
- After bringing food home from restaurants, immediately store in the refrigerator. Never leave it in the car or on a counter for a long period of time.



- Label leftovers with the date so you will know how long they have been in the refrigerator.
- Keep wraps and containers closed tightly to preserve quality and prevent leaking.

Reheating Leftovers



- Solid leftovers should be reheated to 165°F. Reheat sauces, soups, and gravies to a rolling boil.
- Foods can be heated on a stove top, in an oven, or in a microwave oven.
- When reheating in an oven, never use a temperature less than 325°F.
- When reheating in a microwave, be sure to cover the food but loosen a corner or vent the container to allow steam to escape. Rotate or stir food midway through cooking to eliminate cold spots where bacteria can survive. Allow food to stand two minutes reheating to let heat distribute evenly throughout the food. (If your oven manufacturer recommends a different standing time, use that time.)
- Check the temperature of reheated food with an accurate food thermometer placed in the thickest part of the food (or center for pans of liquid food).
- Be sure to reheat precooked foods such as hotdogs and deli-style meats in case of contamination before serving to young children, older adults, pregnant women and those with weakened immune systems.

Large Gatherings

- Serve hot food in chafing dishes or slow cookers, or on warming trays or steam tables to keep it above 140°F.
- Serve cold foods in small bowls nestled in a container of ice to keep them at 40°F or below.
- Check temperatures often with a food thermometer to be sure they stay above 140°F or 40°F or below.
- When a dish is empty or nearly empty, replace with fresh container of food, removing the previous container.
- Discard any leftover food that has been sitting out for more than 2 hours. Discard after 1 hour if the temperature is more than 90°F.

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