

Many families will celebrate the Easter holiday with loved ones this weekend, gathered around the table to share those tried-and-true family recipes. From the spiral sliced ham and deviled eggs to the carrot cake and lemon meringue pies, families will enjoy unique and satisfying traditions passed down through generations.

Once the meal is complete and all the hidden eggs have found their homes in a basket, there are some things to remember in order to keep those leftovers safe. Use the following guidelines to store and reheat your remaining food items:

- Eggs: If you chose to hard boil eggs before your Easter egg hunt, those can only safe to eat one week after cooking. Eggs should be stored at or below 40°F. Use caution if you chose to hide dyed eggs near dirt, pets or other potential sources of bacteria. Those eggs should not be consumed. Even Grade A eggs with clean shells have the potential to contain Salmonella Enteritidis so take care in cooking thoroughly before consumption.
- Ham (including spiral sliced): These may be stored in the refrigerator for 3-5 days or frozen for 1-2 months. Remember, keep your refrigerator at or below 40°F and your freezer at or near 0°F. Date labeling is also important and can be help determine the best consume-by date.
 - Reheating Instructions: To reheat cooked hams, set the oven temperature no lower than 325°F. Heat ham to an internal temperature of 165°F, measured using a food thermometer. You want to remove any potential pathogens that could contaminate the food.
 - Reheat a spiral sliced ham for about 10 minutes per pound. Cover with heavy duty aluminum foil to prevent drying out.
- Leftover casseroles or covered dishes: If leftovers or perishable items were sitting out at room temperature for more than 2 hours, they should be disposed of. Wrap leftovers well and store in airtight containers. This helps keep out bacteria as well as retain moisture. Leftovers can be left in the refrigerator for 3 to 4 days or frozen for 3 to 4 months. It is safe to reheat your leftovers without thawing first. All leftovers should reach an internal temperature of 165°F, measured using a food thermometer. If you are using a microwave, be sure to rotate the food to allow for an even reheating. Microwaves can often leave 'cold spots' in the food and allow bacteria to survive the reheating process.
- Desserts: While you may be thinking, "Who has leftover dessert? That will be the first thing to go", you may have been too full from the main course to indulge just yet. However, keep the 2 hour rule in mind before taking that first bite. If the dessert contains any type of egg mixture, such as custard, bacteria can quickly multiply due to the moisture. These items should be refrigerated until ready to use and not left at room temperature longer than 2 hours.

Consider these guidelines to take the guesswork out what is still safe to eat and what needs to be tossed out. That way, you can continue to enjoy celebratory time with friends and family. After all, Easter is the only time of year you can put all your eggs in one basket.

Sources: USDA, Partnership for Food Safety Education, UGA Cooperative Extension