



Leftovers Done Right

Food prep tips can help whether your goal is prevention or preservation

LIKE IT OR NOT, leftovers happen—especially around the holidays. Maybe the recipe made twice as much as you needed or maybe the sweet potatoes were passed over in favor of pie, but now you're confronted with a fridge full of cooked vegetables, side dishes and turkey, turkey, turkey.

Whether you're anticipating a postholiday surplus or just trying to avoid waste, it's time to practice culinary conservation. The same principles that are used in ecology to save the planet can save your palate from the next-day reheated blahs. Some of the ideas that follow might take a little forethought or effort ... but doesn't almost everything that's good?

REDUCE

Planning out five or six meals at a time may sound like a lot of work. But it makes grocery shopping a

Preserve with a Plunge

If you tend to go overboard in the produce section or at the farmers market, you should know that freezing alone doesn't stop the enzymes that can toughen produce or cause loss of flavor and color. To help prevent deterioration, most vegetables should be blanched—a quick plunge in boiling water, then a shock in cold water for the same amount of time to stop the cooking process—before freezing.

once-a-week breeze, prevents overbuying and minimizes last-minute scurrying to figure out what's for dinner.

Is that too ambitious for you? Start with two or three days' worth of recipes and take the list to the grocery store. Buy only the ingredients you need to complete the recipes—no impulse buys!—and you'll notice how much faster (and less expensive) each trip is. Work your way up to four, then five or six meals at a time.

Or browse food magazines and websites for features that do all the planning for you. Some schedule out a week's worth of meals and include the grocery list of everything you need to pull it off.

REUSE

Plan different meals that use the same ingredients in varying ways. Reserve a few turkey sausages before you grill a bunch for sandwiches. The next day, decase the meat and roll it into meatballs, then cook and serve with pasta, or tucked inside a calzone.

Does your neighbor bless you with a bounty of zucchini from her garden every summer?

Day 1: Sauté zucchini in olive oil with grape tomatoes, black olives and rosemary over medium heat; serve alongside roasted chicken. (Side dish!)

Day 2: Thinly slice zucchini and bake until tender. Add it to cooked pasta with ricotta cheese, olive oil and a splash of lemon. (Vegetarian main dish!)

Day 3: Zucchini bread, anyone? (Snack!)

RECYCLE

Sometimes, already-cooked foods actually make the next night's supper even easier.

+ Think beyond turkey sandwiches this Thanksgiving. Use leftover turkey to make enchiladas, soup, potpies, chili or even BBQ turkey pizza.

+ Leftover boiled potatoes can be cubed and added to a baked frittata with bacon and spinach.

+ Already-cooked rice means one less pot to worry about when you're preparing a meat-and-vegetable stir-fry. Or make burritos by mixing the rice with black beans, shredded cheese and salsa and wrapping it all in a tortilla.

+ Nestle leftover meatballs and spaghetti sauce inside pizza dough with spinach and mozzarella cheese to make calzones.

AND REMEMBER

Pretty much anything, from curried chicken to holiday ham, can go inside a wrap or tortilla. Add some mixed greens, shredded cabbage or thinly chopped vegetables to create a hearty meal. —By Sam Mittelsteadt

Yam Waffles

We usually think of leftovers as something reheated for lunch or dinner, but who says they can't be used in a tasty next-morning treat—say, to fuel you up for shopping the day after Thanksgiving? The American Cancer Society suggests this recipe for yam waffles, which originally appeared in Janet Gaffney's *The Art of Cooking*. (If you don't have a waffle iron, you can use the recipe to make pancakes.) Makes 12.

Ingredients:

- ¾ cup whole-wheat flour
- ¾ cup all-purpose flour
- ½ cup rolled oats
- ¼ cup sugar
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 tablespoon baking powder
- 4 ounces soft/silken tofu
- 1 egg
- 6 ounces yam, cooked and mashed
- 16 ounces yogurt or skim milk
- ⅓ cup canola oil

Directions:

Heat waffle iron. Stir together dry ingredients; set aside. In a blender or food processor, combine remaining ingredients until thoroughly blended. Mix liquid and dry ingredients together. Bake in waffle iron according to guidelines of your appliance.

Nutrition information per serving:

146 calories (44 percent from fat)

