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Thanksgiving's Aftermath

After the great Thanksgiving feast the question looms the next day: What to do with those leftovers?

Keep the following tips in mind for safe, post-feast food handling:

*Do not allow cooked food to remain at room temperature for longer than 2 hours. This places food in the danger zone and microbial growth can escalate.

*Store leftover turkey and stuffing separately in the refrigerator. Never store stuffing in the turkey cavity for it will be the last area to get cold and will remain at danger zone temperatures even while in the refrigerator.

*Cool cooked foods prior to refrigerating. Placing warm or hot foods in the refrigerator does not rapidly or evenly cool them in time to prevent bacteria from growing and, in fact, lowers the temperature of surrounding foods, placing them at risk also.

*Use small, shallow containers to rapidly cool cooked foods prior to refrigeration. Large quantities of cooked foods should be divided into several small portions for efficient cooling. Very rapid cooling of soups and gravies can be achieved by placing their containers in an ice bath and stirring until cooled. All containers should be labeled with the date and contents prior to cold storage.

*Remember that, if properly prepared, served, and stored, cooked turkey and stuffing is safe to keep in the refrigerator for 3 to 4 days. Use gravy within 1 to 2 days. After that, it is best to freeze or throw out any remaining leftovers. For best quality, use frozen leftovers within 2 to 6 months.

Now that those extra portions have been stored properly, consider food safety again whenever reheating and serving those leftovers. Reheating all cooked foods to 165°F or greater will kill bacteria. Therefore, to ensure the safety of leftover soups and gravies, heat to a full boil and continue cooking for a few minutes. Reheat in the oven until the food at the center of the dish is
165°F or higher. Microwaving can speed reheating but rotate and stir the food during cooking to ensure for even reheating.

Use of a kitchen thermometer takes the guesswork out of safe food handling. It is a sound investment when one considers how many potential cases of foodborne illness can be avoided by minimizing the exposure of foods to danger zone temperatures.

Go ahead and enjoy those leftovers. For some, the meals that follow in the days after Thanksgiving are just as traditional as the feast itself. For those looking for new ways to enjoy the holiday bird, read on:

**TURKEY AND WILD MUSHROOM STEW**

2 tablespoons unsalted butter  
1 clove garlic, sliced  
6 ounces button mushrooms, cleaned and sliced  
6 ounces shiitake mushrooms, cleaned and sliced  
6 ounces oyster mushrooms, cleaned and sliced  
2 teaspoons fresh thyme, stemmed and chopped  
2 teaspoons fresh parsley, stemmed and chopped  
2 teaspoons fresh rosemary, stemmed and chopped  
1 3/4 pounds turkey cooked and sliced 1-inch thick  
1 cup dry white wine  
Salt to taste  
Freshly ground black pepper to taste  
Parmesan cheese, grated as needed

Melt butter, add garlic and sauté until golden brown. Add button, shiitake and oyster mushrooms, thyme, parsley and rosemary. Sauté until mushrooms are tender and liquid has evaporated. Stir in turkey slices and wine. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Gently simmer until flavors blend. Adjust seasonings as necessary. Sprinkle with Parmesan cheese.  
*Recipe: Courtesy of the National Turkey Federation and Pilgrim’s Pride.*

**GREEK TURKEY SOUP**

2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice  
1/2 teaspoon all-purpose flour  
2 large eggs  
7 cups turkey/chicken broth, divided  
2 tablespoons olive oil  
2 1/2 cups finely chopped onion  
Dash of salt  
1 1/2 - 2 cups leftover cooked turkey, shredded  
1 cup cooked short-grain rice
1 cup shredded romaine lettuce
1/2 cup sliced green onions
1 tablespoon chopped fresh dill
1/2 teaspoon fresh lemon juice
1/4 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

Combine 2 tablespoons lemon juice and flour in a bowl; whisk until smooth. Add eggs; whisk until combined.

Bring 1 cup broth to a simmer in a medium saucepan over medium-high heat. Gradually add hot broth to egg mixture, stirring constantly with a whisk. Return egg mixture to pan. Cook 2 minutes or until slightly thick, whisking constantly. Remove from heat; set aside.

Heat the oil in a large saucepan over medium-high heat. Add the onion and a dash of salt, and sauté 8 minutes or until tender. Add 6 cups broth; bring to boil. Reduce heat, and simmer 5 minutes. Add turkey meat, and simmer 2 minutes. Add rice, and slowly whisk in egg mixture. Keep warm over low heat. Add remaining ingredients immediately before serving. Makes 6 servings (serving size 1 1/3 cups).

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