

# Food Safety for Families

## Leftover Food Safety

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### **B4 You Bite!**

Dear Parents,

Leftovers can be a great late night snack, next day lunch, or even be used to make a quick meal for your hungry family. Take precautions with leftovers to make sure your family is eating safe food. Follow these leftover handling tips so your family can enjoy delicious and safe “Planned-Overs.”

### **After 4 Days, Throw It Away!**

- ◆ There is a limit to how long food can be kept safely. The **4 Day** refrigerator guideline is a great general rule, but some foods may have a shorter or longer time for storage. **When in doubt, throw it out!**



### **Refrigerating Leftovers**

- ◆ **Refrigerate food within 2 hours of cooking or being served at a restaurant.** Food that has been held at unsafe temperatures for more than 2 hours may become contaminated with harmful bacteria that are not destroyed by ordinary cooking and reheating. Discard any food left out longer than 2 hours.
- ◆ **Do not mix leftovers from the serving table with other food that is still on the stove or in the refrigerator.**
- ◆ **Keep Cold!** Keep your refrigerator at 36-38°F, so food stays below 40°F. Allow air to circulate around the food.

- ◆ **Cool Properly.** Size matters! Separate food into smaller portions and place into shallow pans. Food in each pan or storage container needs to be 3 inches deep or less. Use an ice bath to cool foods such as soups and stews. Let your refrigerator cool leftovers. Store them on the top shelf, cover loosely so the food will cool faster. Once cool, cover them tightly.
- ◆ **Label and Date Storage Containers.** Label your leftover storage containers with the product name and the either date the food was made or a throw away date. This is a great way to know how old food is. To print off labels for use, go to [www.4daythrowaway.org](http://www.4daythrowaway.org)



### **Refrigerated Leftovers: How Long to Keep and be Safe**

|   |                          |
|---|--------------------------|
| Soups & Stews                               | 3-4 days                 |
| Gravy & Meat Broth                          | 1-2 days                 |
| Cooked Meat, Meat Dishes, Casseroles        | 3-4 days                 |
| Luncheon/Deli Meat - <b>Opened Package</b>  | 3-5 days                 |
| Luncheon/Deli Meat- <b>Unopened Package</b> | 2 weeks Or “use by” date |
| Pasta & Potato Salads                       | 3-5 days                 |

# Leftover Safety



## FightBac!®

Bacteria (germs), viruses and parasites are everywhere in the environment! They are organisms that you cannot see, smell, or taste. In fact, they can contaminate food and cause life-threatening illness. Foodborne illness (food poisoning) can strike anyone, especially young children, pregnant women (it endangers their unborn babies too), older adults, and persons with weakened immune systems.

### Freezing Leftovers

- ◆ Use freezer containers or wrap in moisture/vapor-resistant material.
- ◆ When Freezing Leftovers keep frozen at 0°F. Some meats dry out when frozen. Cover in broth to prevent this from happening.
- ◆ Not all leftovers freeze well. Avoid freezing: hard-cooked egg whites (toughens them), lettuce and cabbage (becomes limp), mayonnaise (separates). Cream fillings, puddings, custard, gelatin salads, and cheese do NOT freeze well.
- ◆ Remove as much air as possible, but leave room for expansion of water during freezing.
- ◆ Label and Date Storage Containers. Go to [www.4daythrowaway.org](http://www.4daythrowaway.org) to print off labels for use.
- ◆ Store only the amount of food that will freeze within 24 hours.



### Freezing Leftovers: How Long to Keep and be Safe

|                                      |                 |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------|
| Soups & Stews                        | 2-3 Months      |
| Gravy & Meat Broth                   | 2-3 Months      |
| Cooked Meat, Meat Dishes, Casseroles | 2-6 Months      |
| Luncheon/Deli Meat                   | 1-2 months      |
| Pasta & Potato Salads                | Not Recommended |
| Breads, Cakes & Cookies              | 3-6 Months      |

Check [www.4daythrowaway.org](http://www.4daythrowaway.org) for more storage information.

### Handling Leftovers

- ◆ Wash hands before and after handling leftovers.
- ◆ Use clean utensils and surfaces.
- ◆ Never taste a food to determine if it is safe.



### Reheating Leftovers

- ◆ Reheat leftovers thoroughly on stove or in the microwave to a temperature of 165°F or until hot and steamy. Bring soups, sauces and gravies to a rolling boil.
- ◆ Unless you have a microwave you must allow plenty of time for thawing.
- ◆ Microwave use for reheating leftovers. Use a container that is labeled microwave safe. Check the container for a statement or symbol, such as the one to the right, for safe use in the microwave. Frozen foods can go directly into the microwave.



**Check out 4 Day Throw Away at  
[www.4daythrowaway.org](http://www.4daythrowaway.org)  
or on Twitter, Facebook and You Tube!**