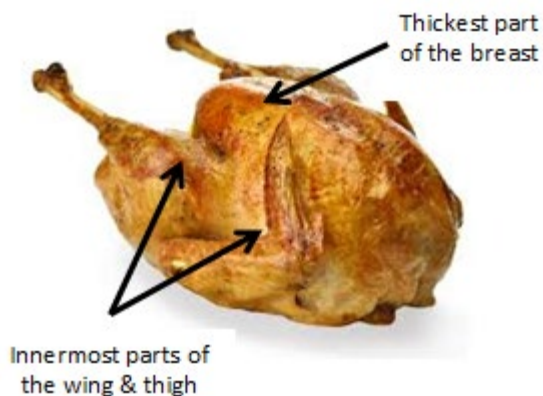




How to keep turkey leftovers safe

It's never too early to start thinking about all of those wonderful turkey leftovers. There's turkey chili, turkey hash, turkey salad, and the ever popular sliced turkey sandwich. But whatever your choice, be sure to follow good food safety practices when preparing your turkey and storing it for those favorite recipes over the next several days.



First, you'll need to start with a properly cooked turkey. You should cook turkey to an internal temperature of 165 degrees F. You can't rely on color to tell if a turkey is done. Always use a meat thermometer to check for doneness. Check the temperature at the thickest part of the breast and the innermost portions of the wings and thighs.

After dinner, don't let food sit out on the table. Refrigerate leftovers within two hours. It is best to remove all of the meat from the turkey. You may leave legs and wings whole, if desired. Place the sliced meat in shallow containers or small zipper bags, and store in the refrigerator if you think you will eat it within the next 3 to 4 days. If you're not sure, it's best to freeze the meat. Once frozen, the meat will be safe forever, as long as the freezer stays below 0 degrees F. But for best quality, use the meat within 6 months. If you have leftover gravy or stuffing, store those separately. Remember to reheat the stuffing to 165 degrees F, and bring the gravy to a full boil before eating again.

Start planning your leftover recipes now. Stock up on noodles, broth, and beans for creative soup and chili recipes. You may even want to try some specialty sandwich bread, relishes, or salad dressings to give turkey sandwiches a new twist.

Source: Annhall Norris, Extension Associate for Food Safety and Preservation; University of Kentucky, College of Agriculture, Food and Environment

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