

Don't leave your dish behind at the pot luck for someone else to clean up, but when you clean out that dish, be sure to place the leftovers in a container that you can leave in the kitchen. Just be sure to let the right people know where you put your leftovers, so they aren't left to rot.

It's especially tempting to take home an unopened bottle of wine or a tin of cookies that wasn't touched, but it's very important that you leave it with your host as they, in themselves, are hostess gifts of sorts. You'd never consider taking back a hostess gift, would you? Leave the unopened items there. They belong to your host now. However, there are exceptions to this rule.

At the heart of this whole never-take-home-leftovers rule is the consideration for your host. If your host asks you to take your leftovers with you, oblige them, pack up your leftovers, and take them home to enjoy. Also, don't be offended if your host asks you to take your leftovers home.

In a family member's or close friend's house, the leftovers rule may not apply. If you don't really want the leftovers that you brought and your hostess asks you to take it home, feel free to offer it to someone else to take home. It could make someone else's life a little easier if that person doesn't have to cook a meal or buy a dessert.

You shouldn't ever take anyone else's leftovers home without the being told by both your host and the person who brought it. Putting scoops of another guests' leftover dishes onto your own to go plate is wrong. I have witnessed other people doing this first hand. It's rude and shows no manners. NEVER EVER bring a plastic container or bag with you with the intent to take food home from the table or buffet.

Rule to live by: When in doubt, leave your leftovers behind.