

## **Leftovers**

To reduce the risk for foodborne illness, make sure to promptly refrigerate leftovers. Once removed from heat, refrigerate leftovers within 2 hours. Throw away any foods left out longer than that. Keep cold items, such as deli meats and salads, at 40 degrees or below. Nest them in bowls of ice or rotate smaller platters frequently. If left out at room temperature longer than 2 hours, throw them out. Do not consume pizza left out overnight.

To prevent bacteria from growing, cool items quickly. So, rather than putting a large pot of soup in the refrigerator, divide it into multiple smaller containers so it cools faster. The same goes for large hams, roasts, and turkeys. You do not need to wait for them to reach room temperature prior to refrigerating.

Refrigerated leftovers should be consumed within 3-4 days. When eating leftovers, be sure to heat them to an internal temperature of 165 degrees before eating. If you take too large of a portion of leftovers, it is safe to refrigerate them again as long as you heated them to 165 degrees prior to refrigerating.

Thawing leftovers is safest when done in the refrigerator. It can also be done in the microwave. If you have leftover leftovers, it is safe to refreeze them as long as they were heated to an internal temperature of 165 degrees before refreezing. Cold water thawing is also possible but ensure that the items are in a leak proof bag or package. Replace the water every half hour. If the bag leaks, water can get into the food and bacteria from the surrounding environment can enter it. Foods thawed this way should be cooked before refreezing. Do not put frozen foods on the counter or in hot water to thaw. This can make bacteria grow faster. Freezers may slow the growth of bacteria, but they do not kill them. When you thaw leftovers, the bacteria may start growing again and make you sick. That is why it's important to reheat thawed leftovers right away.