



**NourishNet**  
A FOOD RECOVERY TOOLBOX



## Re-purposing Leftovers

Most leftovers are perfectly safe to eat, and using them is a great way to save money and reduce waste. So why don't we always eat them? Here are some reasons:

- Leftovers can be forgotten in the fridge. Try hanging a list of your leftovers on the fridge.
- Some people don't enjoy eating the same foods for multiple meals. Try freezing individual portions for later when they don't feel repetitive.

### Storing Cooked Food Safely

Keeping cooked food safe is vital when using leftovers.

- Food should be cooled before storing.
- Thaw frozen foods overnight in the fridge, in a microwave, or under cold, running water. Avoid leaving food on the counter to thaw.
- Store leftovers in airtight containers, baggies, or tight wrapping (like plastic wrap or foil) to prevent cross-contamination and keep food fresh.
- Most leftovers will be fresh in the fridge for 3 - 4, days or in the freezer for several months.

### Preserve the Life of Leftovers

Freezing is the simplest preservation method and works for a wide variety of foods.

- Use heavy-weight, moisture-resistant wrapping (like freezer paper) and food storage bags to prevent freezer burn.
- Most raw vegetables benefit from blanching (briefly cooking in boiling water) before being placed in the freezer. Blanching helps kill bacteria and preserves the flavor and color of the food.



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## Cook Once, Eat Twice

Here are some practical ideas to reinvent leftovers into a new meal.

| LEFTOVER        | REPURPOSE                                                                         |
|-----------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Baked potatoes  | Hash                                                                              |
| Rice            | Fried rice                                                                        |
| Meat            | Filling for sandwiches/wraps                                                      |
| Vegetables      | Blend into soup                                                                   |
| Stale bread     | Croutons or breadcrumbs                                                           |
| Overripe fruit  | Mash and add to baked goods                                                       |
| Mixed leftovers | Add to stir fry, frittata, omelet or pasta, or layer over rice, quinoa, or greens |

## Surprising Ways to Re-purpose Food

The only limit is your imagination! Here are some ideas:

- Save a bag of vegetable scraps in your freezer and make stock when full.
- Finely chop greens from root vegetables and use in place of basil for pesto.
- Blend banana peels with a little water and add to banana bread.
- Re-grow leafy foods – try placing the base of lettuce, cabbage, or celery in water and setting it in a sunny window to sprout some new leaves.



NSF Convergence Accelerator



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