

Thankful Leftovers Make Scrumptious Timesavers!

By Libby Mills, MS, RD, LDN

Turkey, turkey, and more turkey...and all the trimmings. When the Thanksgiving meal is over, all the leftovers can be overwhelming--but not with a little strategy. Here are some tips to turn leftover turkey, stuffing, mashed potatoes, and vegetables into scrumptious timesavers.

Be prepared. You'll need to be ready with a few supplies and tools.

Leftover management check list

- Plastic wrap
- Freezer grade sealing plastic bags
- Knives and a chopping board
- Spatulas for saving every delicious morsel of your feast
- Labels or tape on which you can identify what is in each container and the date
- Stackable plastic containers of various sizes—
 - 1/2 cup for daps of gravy and single servings of cooked vegetables, mashed potatoes and stuffing (Perfect for sending back to school with your college student.)
 - 1 cup for double servings
 - 2 cup shallow containers for creating one and two serving frozen dinners
 - and other larger size containers
- Run the dishwasher when you can during the day and have it empty when you begin putting leftovers away. This way you can rinse and load dirty serving dishes right away.
- Have freezer and refrigerator space available.

Clean up

- Don't let food sit out too long. Try to have it put away in two hours.
- Portion what cannot be eaten within 3-4 days into freezer bags and containers.
- Store ready for the next meal. Pre portion and pre cut the turkey and vegetables.
- Protect sliced turkey from losing moisture and juiciness by putting a sheet of plastic wrap directly on or around the poultry, even when storing in a container.
- Carve turkey off the bone.
- Separate turkey bones at joints and collapse the rib cage. Roasting the bones in the oven will make a delicious stock for soup another day.
- Store frozen cooked turkey for 3-4 months.

Enjoy Thanksgiving dinner again and again. Use the small two cup shallow plastic container to portion the right amount of turkey, potatoes, and stuffing with ample vegetables. Put the lid on, label, and put right in the freezer for fresh leftovers anytime.

Simple turkey combos, can add a tantalizing twist to the lunch box scene. Wraps and sandwiches are easy and fun to create and everyone can do it!

Experiment with colorful flavored tortillas—sun dried tomato, jalapeno, and herbed. Let your bread take new shapes by trying a whole-wheat pita. And with turkey, anything goes—cinnamon raisin, multi-grain, rye, or corn bread.

Try a light spread of low-fat mayo combine with some of Aunt Mary's cranberry relish, or exciting spicy mustard. If spicy, savory flavors are calling, add salsa, hot sauce, or tomato sauce.

Traditionalist can stick to lettuce and tomatoes, but for the daring, try slicing cucumber, beets, fennel, or radishes; or, some grated carrot or broccoli, or sprouts; use the leftover vegetables—add kraut to a turkey on rye for a Thanksgiving Ruben and green beans roll perfectly in a wrap.

Of course, you can combine all the leftovers in a pot with homemade turkey broth for an incredible soup. Or, create a whole new flavor. Use a low-sodium turkey, chicken or vegetable broth, combine mashed sweet potatoes, curry, a squeeze of lemon, minced garlic and fresh chopped herbs.

Thicken soups with leftovers mashed potatoes. The spuds will add a creamy texture. Using cream would add a lot of fat.

Top casseroles, Sheppard pies and potpies with leftover stuffing instead of high fat bread crumbs and butter, potato chips or pie crust.

Blend plain no-fat yogurt with cranberry relish for a crimson smoothie full of nutrition.

Create a beautiful turkey fruit salad with mandarin oranges, green grapes and blanched almonds. Toss with warmed the cranberry sauce—so that it is not a gel, and serve over a bed of field greens or spinach.

Toss bit-size turkey and vegetables into your favorite pasta. Serve steaming hot with your favorite red sauce. Or toss with chilled bow tie, whole-wheat pene, or macaroni and low fat Italian or Caesar dressing for cool pasta salad. Don't be shy with adding fresh vegetables for a different texture and more color.

Add texture and flavor by substituting barley, quinoa, lentils, or beans for the pasta. Or try a Creole turkey jumbalia made with brown rice. And for a lighter version, use spaghetti squash for the your signature batch of Turkey Tetrizzini.

Turkey Tetrazzini with Spaghetti Squash

1 large spaghetti squash
1 tablespoon canola oil
1 medium onion, finely chopped
1 large stalk, thinly sliced
1 large red pepper, diced
1/8 teaspoon fresh ground black pepper
3 tablespoons flour
2 cups low-sodium turkey, chicken, or vegetable broth
1 cup skim milk
1 bay leaf
2 tablespoons parsley, minced
1 tablespoon lemon juice
2 cups cooked turkey or chicken, cubed
2 tablespoons dry breadcrumbs

Cook Spaghetti Squash (can be done in advance)

Preheat oven to 350 degrees Fahrenheit. Cut through the squash in several places. On a lipped cooking tray, bake for 1 hour or until fork tender. Allow cooling for handling.

Halve the squash. Remove and discard the seeds. With a fork, scrape out the meat of the squash and spread evenly into a 1 ½ quart baking dish.

In large saucepan over medium heat, sauté onions, celery, red pepper and black pepper for about three minutes or until onions are soft. Stir in the flour. Whisk in the broth and milk. Add the bay leaf and simmer 20 minutes stirring occasionally. Remove from the heat and add the parsley, lemon juice and turkey.

(I like to add several red pepper flakes for a little zip!)

Pour evenly over the squash. Top with breadcrumbs. Bake for 30 minutes or until bubbly. Serves 4

Adapted from <http://www.cooks.com/rec/doc/0,1718,147177-233197,00.html>

Nutrition

Calories	249
Carbohydrates	32 g
Protein	29 g
Total fat	6 g
Saturated fat	1.19 g
Polyunsaturated fat	1.67 g
Monounsaturated fat	2.34 g
Cholesterol	63 mg
Fiber	5.2 g
Sodium	207 mg