

LEFT OVER COOKING / RECHAUFFE COOKING

Although freshly cooked food is better than reheated food, in the interests of economy and food management, reheating of food forms an important part of cooking. A clever cook should take pride in seeing that the second appearance is appetizing and that the maximum amount of nourishment is retained. Great care must be taken in reheating food, particularly meat. Since it is already cooked, further cooking will toughen the fibre, harden the proteins, thus making the food indigestible. Therefore, the first rule is never recook, only reheat.

Food may be warmed in a moderate oven if carefully covered. If the vessel containing food can be placed in a tin containing water, over drying is prevented. Steaming is one of the best methods of reheating as the heat is gentle and does not dry the food. A covering is necessary to prevent the condensed steam from falling on the food. Frequently it may be necessary to do more than just reheat and, therefore, an ingenious cook must find ways and means of using up cooked food to make new dishes, e.g., cutlets, minced collops, shepherd's pie, hash, and curry can be made without having to recook.

Everyone has leftovers. How you deal with leftovers will determine whether they are a plus or a minus, and whether you lose or save money. When you throw them out, it is the same as throwing out money. However it takes time, planning, knowledge, and creativity for you to be able to take those leftovers and use them in a way that your family and you will want to eat them again.

The more skill you have at using leftovers, the lower your food bill will be. Sometimes we can make our favorite recipes with out leftovers. One of the favorite is crescent rolls we make out of leftover turkey.

Rules for reheating food:-

- (i) Never recook, only reheat.
- (ii) Make use of all scraps of food, e.g., vegetables, sauces, gravy, etc. but be sure that they are absolutely fresh.
- (iii) Remove gristle, bone and skin but not fat unless in excess because fat helps to keep the food moist.
- (iv) Divide finely so that flavourings and seasonings can penetrate quickly and the food can be reheated quickly to avoid re cooking.
- (v) Cook any ingredient such as vegetables before adding it to the food that has to be reheated, e.g., if a cutlet has to be made from roast the potatoes should be boiled first and then mixed for binding. The short, quick reheating does not allow time for the cooking of raw ingredients.
- (vi) Additional moisture is always necessary in the form of sauce or gravy as most of the original moisture will have been removed. (vii) A binding is essential for croquettes, rissoles, etc., but see that the binding is properly cooked before being added, e.g., as with Panada. (viii) Cooked meat and fish become insipid when cold. So they must be carefully seasoned and flavoured in reheating. Meat is improved by the addition of ham, tongue, salted meat, onions, tomatoes, mushrooms, curry paste and fresh vegetables, while fish is improved by the addition of lemon juice, parsley and other mixed herbs.
- (ix) It is often necessary to coat food to protect it from direct heat and therefore, merely reheat:
e.g.
 - (a) Covering with potato as in shepherd's pie.
 - (b) Coating with egg and breadcrumbs.
 - (c) Enclosing in pastry as in mutton patties.
 - (d) Enclosing in batter as in pan rolls.
- (x) Dish daintily and garnish neatly.
- (xi) Serve with a good gravy or a sharp sauce as an accompaniment.
- (xii) Serve hot. Half-warmed, reheated food is far from appetizing.

Having said that, here are some ideas to help you with your leftovers. This article focuses on generalities, and not specific recipes.

MEALS THAT ACCOMMODATE LEFTOVERS

SANDWICHES :- Almost all meats can be put in the blender and then mixed with a little mayonnaise to make a sandwich spread. Spreads can be made more flavorful with the addition of seasonings, chopped vegetables and eggs, mustard, pickles, and spices. Spread the mix on a piece of whole grain bread; add a slice of cheese and your favorite lettuce. You've got a delicious sandwich with just a small amount of leftover meat.

SOUPS and STEWS:- Leftover meat and vegetables can find a home in many types of soups and stews. Keep a container in your freezer for leftover vegetables. When you are ready to make soup or stew, just add them.

POT PIE:- This is a very economical way to make use of leftover meat and vegetables. Just add a little sauce to your diced up meat and vegetables and your filling is done. You can put it in a pastry crust, or you can just put a layer of biscuits on top or mashed potatoes. It becomes a very fast and easy recipe if you use a store bought can of biscuits.

CASSEROLES:- There are a zillion recipes for casseroles. All you need is a little pasta, meat, and sauce. The sauce can be a can of creamed soup.

You can make fast meals by adding leftover meat and vegetables to boxes of Rice-a-Roni, or Macaroni and Cheese.

OMELETTES:- You can fill omelettes with a blend of cheeses as well as cut up meat and vegetables. Longhorn and cottage cheese blend together well. If the vegetables are fresh, you just sauté them before adding. If they are already cooked, add at the last minute.

USES FOR LEFTOVER INGREDIENTS

MEAT:- Casseroles, Soups, Stews, Stroganoff, Sandwich Fillings, Stir Fry, Quiche, Enchiladas, Tacos, Hash, Meatloaf, and Meatballs.

ONIONS, CELERY, and GREEN PEPPERS:- In addition to the above suggestions, considering juicing these items and freezing the broth. This is how sauce is made for spaghetti and lasagna in fancy restaurants. The broth adds a wonderful flavor to tomato-based sauces. Add to your Mexican food such as Enchiladas and Chili.

POTATOES:- Potatoes are one of the most inexpensive and versatile foods you will find in the produce section of the grocery store. They are abundant, and always available. If your family doesn't like them, you just haven't found a way to cook them to their liking.

They also have the virtue of being easily re-used. There are so many ways to use leftover potatoes. They can be mashed, re-mashed, hashed, made into pancakes, baked, and used in everything from soups and stews to pot pies.

Make potatoe cakes out of leftover mashed potatoes. Mix them with buttermilk, eggs, and spices, and fry in 1/2 inch vegetable oil until they are golden.

OTHER VEGETABLES:-

*All unused vegetables should be saved in the freezer to add to soups, stews, and pot pies.

*Serve cold as a salad with Italian dressing.

FRUIT:- If you have leftover fruit you know you will not eat, put it in the blender and puree it. Then freeze it, preferably in ice cube trays. You can add these cubes to gelatin, as well as soups and sauces.

*Fruit can also be made into delicious deserts. You can make pies, cobblers, or you can just top the cooked fruit with a little flour, oatmeal and sugar (like apple crisp).

*You can also put fruit in cakes and muffins. Just make allowances for the fruit juice and decreased the liquid in the recipe.

*You can layer fruit in a dessert glass over cake, and add syrups and whipped cream and have an English type trifle dessert.

*You can also freeze the syrup in Popsicle molds. Add a little milk if you want more of a pudding pop.

*Use the syrup from canned fruit to baste ham or marinade food.

On the website I talk about what I did with all the plums I grew in the yard of my last house. I canned them whole. Then when I wanted to make jello, I would puree them and add them to the gelatin. It was delicious, and so simple to do.

EGGS:-

*Use leftover egg whites to make angel food cake, or meringue. You can always add additional egg whites to cake mixes.

*Use leftover egg yolks to make pound cake, custard, or macaroons.

BREAD:-

- *Try making bread pudding. People don't make it much anymore, but it was once very popular.
- *Make breadcrumbs to be added to the top of casseroles or to ground beef. One of our readers suggested that if your children won't eat the crust of their sandwiches, take it off the bread before making the sandwich for making breadcrumbs.
- *Make croutons for salads.
- *French Toast. French toast is not limited to just white bread. You can also use quick rise breads, like banana bread.
- *Toast and cover with scrambled eggs.

MISC:-

- *All baked products can usually be frozen. If wrapped well, they come out as fresh as they went in the freezer. Buy in bulk and freeze some for later.
- *Fresh leftover waffles and pancakes can also be frozen for easy use later.
- *Freeze leftover pasta, or serve cold as a salad, with chopped vegetables and an Italian dressing.
- *Bits and pieces of pie crust can be frozen and used later for small quiche dishes or tarts.
- *Save the water you boil vegetables in. It is full of nutrients and has flavor. Use it as the base for soups, stews, and gravy.
- *Always serve meat separately from Spaghetti. Leftover meat can later go in chili, tacos, sloppy Joes, and other tomato based dishes.
- *Save leftover bits of cereals, crackers, and cookies. Crush them to make a crunchy topping for chicken and casseroles. You can also add them to homemade granola.
- *Use add leftover bits of cheese to hamburger or add to salads. You can also add to any tomato based sauce.