



# THANKSGIVING GUIDE

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Turkey Safety Tips  
20 Recipes for Leftovers



# Happy Thanksgiving



Thanksgiving might be one day on the calendar, but around here, the flavors deserve a longer tour. These leftover recipes are proof that a good meal doesn't stop when the plates are cleared — it just gets a second shift.

Whether you're stacking turkey sandwiches after a long day, turning mashed potatoes into crispy golden cakes, or reinventing stuffing as breakfast waffles, each recipe keeps the comfort alive without the repeat routine. It's about making the most of what you've got, sharing it with your crew, and finding new reasons to gather around the kitchen table.

So before you toss those containers, open them up and fire up a little creativity. Because in true firehouse fashion, there's no such thing as "just leftovers" — there's only another chance to cook something worth talking about.

From our table to yours — stay hungry, stay thankful, and keep it seasoned.

- Unkie

**Unkie's Seasoning**  
From the Firehouse to Your House



# How to Thaw a Turkey Safely

Whether you're team fridge, water, or microwave, here's how long it takes and how to do it safely for the perfect Thanksgiving bird.



## Thawing in the Fridge

- Safest Method -

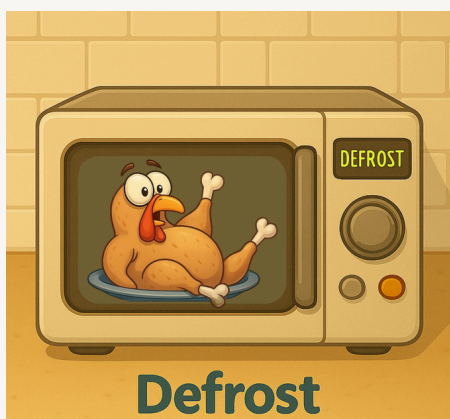
- Allow 24 hours for every 5 pounds of turkey.
- Example: 15 lbs = about 3 days.
- Keep in original wrapping.
- Place breast-side up in a pan to catch drips.
- Once thawed, turkey stays good up to 2 days in fridge.



## Thawing in Cold Water

- Faster Method -

- Allow 30 minutes per pound.
- Example: 15 lbs = 7½-8 hours.
- Keep in original wrapping and seal in a leak-proof bag.
- Submerge breast-side down in cold water.
- Change water every 30 minutes.
- Cook immediately after thawing.



## Thawing in the Microwave

- Quickest Method -

- Follow microwave manual for times and settings.
- Usually takes about an hour or more.
- Remove all packaging and metal clips.
- Use a microwave-safe pan to catch drips.
- Cook immediately after thawing.
- Clean microwave afterward to prevent cross-contamination.

# Approximate Thaw Times

Turkey Weight	Fridge	Cold Water
10 - 18 lbs	2 - 3.5 days	5 - 9 hours
18 - 22 lbs	3.5 - 4.5 days	9 - 11 hours
22 - 24 lbs	4.5 - 5 days	11 - 12 hours
24 - 29 lbs	5 - 6 days	12 - 15 hours

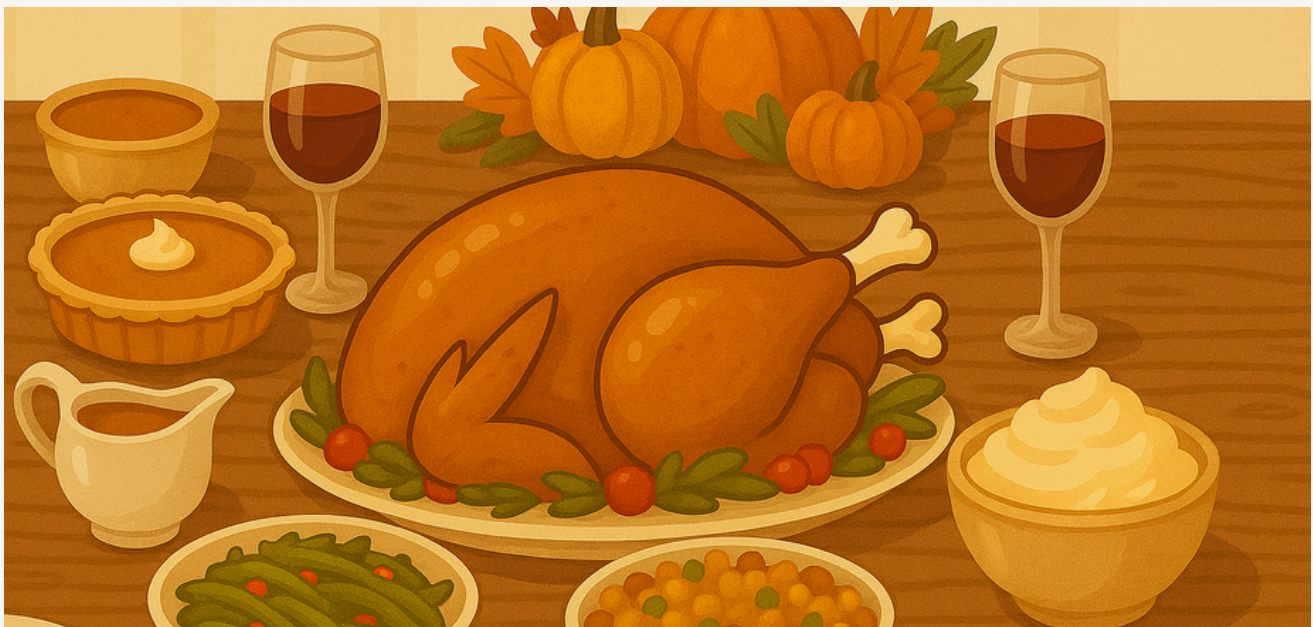
**Tip:** You can combine methods.

Thaw in the fridge for 2 days, then finish in cold water  
Thanksgiving morning.



## Keep It Safe, Keep It Delicious

- Always keep below 40°F while thawing.
- Never thaw on the counter or in hot water.
- Cook immediately after using water or microwave methods.
- Prevent foodborne illness
- Slow, Safe Thawing = Happy Guests.

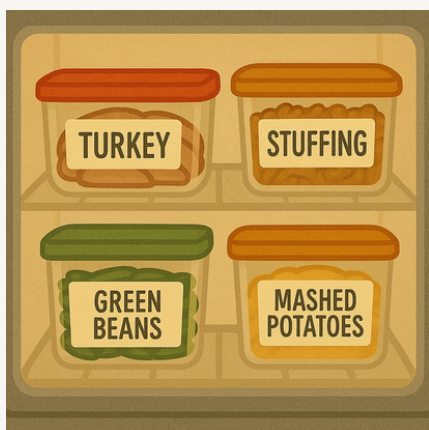






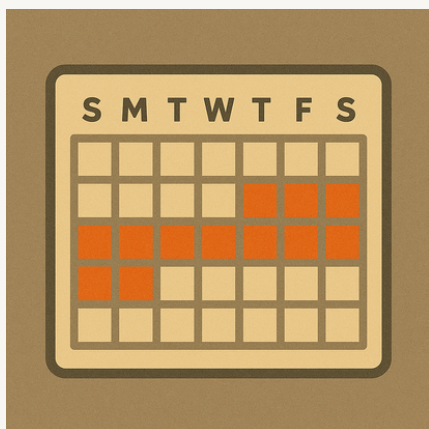
## Thanksgiving Leftovers: Safe Keeping & Weekend Grazing

You did the cooking. Now enjoy the leftovers — safely. Keep this quick guide handy for how long to keep, freeze, and reheat your Thanksgiving favorites.



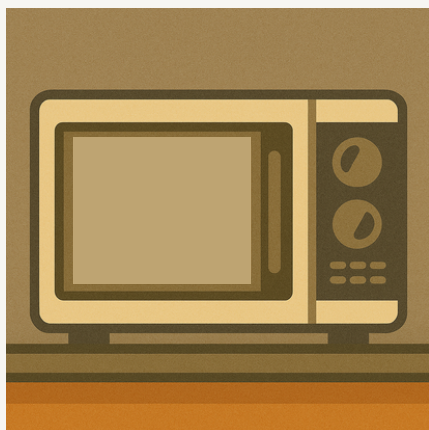
## Handle Leftovers Like a Pro

- Store leftovers within 2 hours of cooking.
- Use shallow, covered containers for quick cooling.
- Don't wait for food to reach room temp.
- Refrigerate while still warm.
- Slice the turkey off the bone before storing.



## How Long Do Leftovers Last?

- Eat or freeze by Monday after Thanksgiving.
- Refrigerated: 3–4 days safe to eat.
- Frozen: Best quality within 2–6 months.
- After 4 days, bacteria can grow, even in the fridge.



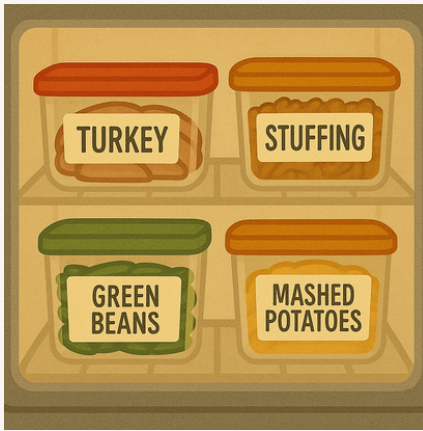
## Reheat It Right

- Heat leftovers to 165°F (74°C) check with a thermometer.
- Cover food to keep moisture and ensure even heating.
- Sauces, soups, gravies: Bring to a rolling boil.
- Microwave smart:
- Use microwave-safe glass or ceramic dishes.
- Add a splash of liquid if needed.
- Cover loosely, vent lid, rotate halfway, check temp in multiple spots.



# Fridge & Freezer Guide

Food	Fridge	Freezer
Turkey	3 - 4 days	2 - 4 months
Stuffing	3 - 5 days	2 - 4 months
Mashed Potatoes	3 - 5 days	4 - 6 months
Cranberry Sauce	7 - 10 days	2 - 4 months
Pumpkin Pie	----	Several months



## Keep It Fresh Longer

- Store in airtight, shallow containers.
- Wrap tightly in foil or freezer-safe bags.
- Label and date everything.
- Avoid freezer burn with tight seals and quick freezing.



## Need a Hand?

- Download the USDA FoodKeeper App for reminders and food safety tips.
- Call: 1-888-MPHotline (1-888-674-6854)
- Email: [MPHotline@usda.gov](mailto:MPHotline@usda.gov)
- Chat Live: [ask.usda.gov](https://ask.usda.gov)



# Turkey Pot Pie

**Prep Time:** 15 min **Cook Time:** 30 min **Servings:** 4

## Ingredients:

2 cups cooked turkey, chopped  
1 cup mixed vegetables  
1 can cream of chicken soup  
1 pie crust (top & bottom)

## Instructions:

1. Preheat oven to 400°F.
2. Mix turkey, vegetables, and soup in a bowl.
3. Pour into crust, top with second crust, seal edges.
4. Bake 25–30 minutes until golden.

# Turkey Shepherd's Pie

**Prep Time:** 10 min **Cook Time:** 25 min **Servings:** 4

## Ingredients:

2 cups chopped turkey  
1 cup mixed vegetables  
1 cup gravy  
2 cups mashed potatoes

## Instructions:

1. Combine turkey, veggies, and gravy in a baking dish.
2. Spread mashed potatoes evenly on top.
3. Bake at 375°F for 25 minutes until hot and lightly browned.

# Turkey Cranberry Quesadillas

**Prep Time:** 10 min **Cook Time:** 8 min **Servings:** 2

## Ingredients:

2 flour tortillas  
1 cup chopped turkey  
½ cup shredded cheese  
2 tbsp cranberry sauce

## Instructions:

1. Spread cranberry sauce on one tortilla.
2. Add turkey and cheese, top with second tortilla.
3. Cook on a skillet until golden on both sides. Slice & serve.



# Loaded Potato Cakes

**Prep Time:** 10 min **Cook Time:** 10 min **Servings:** 4

## Ingredients:

2 cups mashed potatoes  
½ cup shredded cheese  
2 tbsp flour  
2 tbsp chopped bacon  
Oil for frying

## Instructions:

1. Mix all ingredients into patties.
2. Pan-fry each side 3–4 minutes until crisp and golden.

# Mashed Potato Soup

**Prep Time:** 10 min **Cook Time:** 15 min **Servings:** 4

## Ingredients:

2 cups mashed potatoes  
2 cups chicken broth  
½ cup milk or cream  
½ cup shredded cheddar  
Salt & pepper to taste

## Instructions:

1. Heat broth and mashed potatoes in a pot until smooth.
2. Stir in milk, cheese, and seasonings.
3. Simmer 10 minutes.

# Ultimate Thanksgiving Sandwich

**Prep Time:** 5 min **Cook Time:** 0 min **Servings:** 1

## Ingredients:

2 slices bread  
Turkey slices  
Stuffing  
Cranberry sauce  
Warm gravy

## Instructions:

1. Layer turkey, stuffing, and cranberry sauce.
2. Drizzle with warm gravy, close sandwich, and enjoy.

# Thanksgiving Monte Cristo Sandwich

**Prep Time:** 10 min **Cook Time:** 10 min **Servings:** 2

## Ingredients:

4 slices bread  
2 slices turkey  
2 slices ham  
Swiss cheese  
2 eggs, beaten  
Cranberry sauce for dipping

## Instructions:

1. Layer meats and cheese between bread slices.
2. Dip in beaten egg and grill until golden.
3. Serve with cranberry sauce.

# Sweet Potato Pancakes

**Prep Time:** 10 min **Cook Time:** 10 min **Servings:** 4

## Ingredients:

2 cups mashed sweet potatoes  
1 egg  
¼ cup flour  
½ tsp cinnamon

## Instructions:

1. Mix ingredients until smooth.
2. Spoon batter into skillet, flatten slightly, cook 3–4 minutes per side..

# Roasted Veggie Soup

**Prep Time:** 10 min **Cook Time:** 20 min **Servings:** 2

## Ingredients:

2 cups leftover roasted vegetables  
2 cups broth  
½ cup cream  
Salt & pepper

## Instructions:

1. Blend vegetables and broth until smooth.
2. Pour into pot, stir in cream, simmer 15–20 minutes.



# Biscuits & Turkey Gravy

**Prep Time:** 5 min **Cook Time:** 10 min **Servings:** 4

## Ingredients:

2 cups leftover gravy  
1 cup shredded turkey  
4 biscuits

## Instructions:

1. Warm gravy and turkey together.
2. Split biscuits, pour gravy mixture over top.

# Cranberry BBQ Turkey Sliders

**Prep Time:** 10 min **Cook Time:** 10 min **Servings:** 2

## Ingredients:

1 cup leftover turkey  
½ cup BBQ sauce  
¼ cup cranberry sauce  
Slider buns

## Instructions:

1. Mix BBQ and cranberry sauce, stir in turkey.
2. Warm mixture and serve on slider buns.

# Turkey Fried Rice

**Prep Time:** 10 min **Cook Time:** 10 min **Servings:** 4

## Ingredients:

2 cups cold cooked rice  
1 cup chopped turkey  
2 eggs, lightly beaten  
1 cup mixed vegetables  
3 tbsp soy sauce  
1 tbsp oil

## Instructions:

1. Heat oil in a skillet. Add veggies and sauté.
2. Push to one side, scramble eggs on the other.
3. Add rice and turkey, pour soy sauce over, stir-fry 3–5 minutes.

# Turkey Breakfast Burritos

**Prep Time:** 10 min **Cook Time:** 10 min **Servings:** 4

## Ingredients:

4 tortillas  
1 cup chopped turkey  
4 scrambled eggs  
½ cup shredded cheese  
Hot sauce (optional)

## Instructions:

1. Layer eggs, turkey, and cheese on each tortilla.
2. Roll tightly and toast seam-side down until golden.

# Turkey Stuffed Peppers

**Prep Time:** 15 min **Cook Time:** 25 min **Servings:** 4

## Ingredients:

- 4 bell peppers, halved and seeded
- 2 cups chopped turkey
- 1 cup cooked rice or stuffing
- 1 cup tomato sauce
- ½ cup shredded cheese

## Instructions:

1. Mix turkey, rice, and sauce.
2. Spoon into peppers, top with cheese.
3. Bake at 375°F for 25 minutes.

# Thanksgiving Hash

**Prep Time:** 10 min **Cook Time:** 15 min **Servings:** 4

## Ingredients:

1 cup turkey  
1 cup stuffing  
1 cup mashed potatoes  
1 tbsp butter  
2 eggs (optional)

## Instructions:

1. Melt butter, add chopped leftovers, and fry until crispy.
2. Top with fried eggs for a hearty breakfast.



# Cheesy Potato Balls

**Prep Time:** 10 min **Cook Time:** 10 min **Servings:** 4

## Ingredients:

2 cups mashed potatoes  
½ cup shredded cheese  
½ cup breadcrumbs  
1 egg

## Instructions:

1. Form mashed potatoes around a pinch of cheese.
2. Roll in egg and breadcrumbs.
3. Fry until golden brown.

# Stuffing Waffles

**Prep Time:** 5 min **Cook Time:** 5 min **Servings:** 4

## Ingredients:

2 cups leftover stuffing  
1 egg

## Instructions:

1. Mix stuffing and egg until combined.
2. Press into a hot waffle iron until crisp. Serve with gravy or fried egg.

# Sweet Potato Turkey Curry

**Prep Time:** 15 min **Cook Time:** 25 min **Servings:** 4

## Ingredients:

- 2 cups diced sweet potatoes
- 1 cup chopped turkey
- 1 can coconut milk
- 1 tbsp curry powder
- 1 cup mixed vegetables

## Instructions:

1. Sauté vegetables, add curry powder.
2. Stir in sweet potatoes, turkey, and coconut milk.
3. Simmer 20–25 minutes until thickened.

# Thanksgiving Pizza

**Prep Time:** 10 min   **Cook Time:** 12 min   **Servings:** 4

## Ingredients:

- 1 pizza crust
- ½ cup gravy (as sauce)
- 1 cup turkey
- ½ cup mashed potatoes
- ½ cup stuffing
- ¼ cup cranberry sauce (drizzle)

## Instructions:

1. Spread gravy over crust.
2. Layer toppings, drizzle cranberry sauce.
3. Bake at 425°F for 12–15 minutes.

# Cranberry Turkey Salad

**Prep Time:** 10 min   **Cook Time:** 0 min   **Servings:** 4

## Ingredients:

- 2 cups chopped turkey
- ¼ cup cranberry sauce
- ¼ cup mayo
- ¼ cup chopped celery
- Salt & pepper to taste

## Instructions:

1. Mix all ingredients until creamy.
2. Serve on croissants, rolls, or over lettuce.



There's so much more you can make with Thanksgiving leftovers — it just takes a little creativity.

Try turning them into Cranberry Glazed Meatloaf, Stuffing–Stuffed Bell Peppers, Sweet Potato Cinnamon Rolls, Turkey Alfredo Pasta, Leftover Gravy Poutine Fries, Thanksgiving Egg Rolls, Turkey and Corn Chowder, or even a Pumpkin Pie Milkshake.

The key is simple: be creative, have fun, and give those leftovers a second life worth savoring.