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3 Really Good Reasons to Use Your Thanksgiving Leftovers

The sheer wonderfulness of eating leftover turkey sandwiches is just one of them.



By Bridget Shirvell



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Leftovers is one of the sweetest of words. Especially around Thanksgiving. No matter what your Turkey Day menu is there will be leftovers and yet according to a new study by the [Natural Resources Defense Council](#) most American's aren't eating that extra food. The NRDC analyzed the food-waste habits of households in three major studies and found that the average person wasted nearly 4 pounds of food per week and that 23 percent of edible trash consisted of prepared leftovers, so our reason #1 to use your Thanksgiving leftovers is to prevent food waste. Food that rots away in landfills releasing methane gas, a greenhouse gas that is 25 percent more potent than carbon dioxide. Reason #2 is that wasting food is literally throwing money away: An average American household of four people wastes more than \$1,000 dollars of food each year.

And then there's reason #3 (it's the one we like best); the fact that by not eating leftovers, especially around Thanksgiving you're missing out on pure deliciousness – [Turkey Breakfast Tacos](#) (or a slice of pumpkin pie to start the day!), [turkey sandwiches](#) all day long, even cocktails. “Jammy items such as cranberry sauce and pie fillings are great sugar and flavor

sources. One of my favorite ways to use these leftovers is in a variation on a classic cocktail such as the [French 75](#)," says bartender Annie Williams Pierce, winner of this year's [Most Imaginative Bartender Competition](#).

Seriously, why would you throw away cranberry sauce when you can make cocktails or [crumb bars](#) with it? This Thanksgiving take advantage of all your leftovers and turn uneaten food into incredible meals with minimal prep, here's how.



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PLAN AHEAD

Think about Thanksgiving leftovers before you shop for your Turkey Day feast. Pay close attention to portion sizes; aim buy the food the need if you don't want lots of leftovers (there will still be some leftovers!) or just enough to allow for leftovers if you do. For the turkey count on 1-1/2 to 2 pounds of weight per person with leftovers. [Everyday Food](#) host and Editorial

Food Director, [Sarah Carey](#) buys a larger turkey than she needs for dinner so she can make her [Thanksgiving-Leftovers Pie](#), which also uses up leftover cranberry sauce and stuffing: “I always make extra turkey so I have a pie for the day after,” Sarah said.

WHAT TO MAKE?

“I keep it simple with Thanksgiving leftovers. [Turkey soup](#) with any leftover meat, shredded and stirred into stock with chopped up vegetables from the holiday feast, and finished fresh with lemon juice and any herbs on hand, like parsley. Also turkey sandwiches with sliced leftover meat, crunchy lettuce and cranberry sauce and mustard. Sometimes I’ll do a “deconstructed” version of a turkey sandwich and pile things onto leftover stuffing and finish with some gravy, like a turkey bowl.” said [Greg Lofts](#), deputy food editor.

[Get our Hands-Down Favorite Thanksgiving Leftovers Recipes](#)

When you've finally had enough of pie: “Use slightly sweet leftovers in a boozy milkshake makes for a fun dessert. Pumpkin pie or even sweet potato casserole (with a little sweetened-condensed milk), ice cream, liquor, and spices such as nutmeg and cinnamon and then blend together to make a seasonal, boozy milkshake. It will satisfy your sweet cravings while simultaneously clearing your fridge of leftovers.” said Annie Williams Pierce.

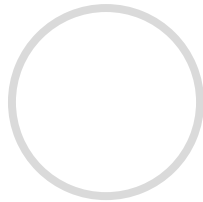
[Watch How to Make our \(Non-Boozy\) Pumpkin Pie Milkshake](#)

HOW TO STORE THANKSGIVING LEFTOVERS

Make sure all leftovers are stored in leakproof containers or bags, ideally within two hours of cooking. This helps to maintain the quality of the food and avoid unwanted bacteria. And if there is more than you can use in a few days: “Cooked turkey meat can be sealed in freezer bags and frozen.” Greg said, thinking of future turkey sandwiches, soup, and [curry](#).

[Learn Which Leftovers to Eat and Which to Freeze](#)

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