

Cooking for One or Two People: Creative Use of Leftovers



When cooking, make a little extra so you have leftovers. Using leftovers can make meal preparation easier, reduce food waste and save you time in the kitchen.

Some ideas to get you started

Just about anything left over can go into a stir-fry, casserole, soup or salad. Can't finish the whole tin of soup? Use it in sauces, gravies and casseroles. Be creative!

Vegetables and Fruit

- Cook a bunch of broccoli, a head of cauliflower or larger amounts of other vegetables. Eat one serving hot; marinate some in vegetable oil, vinegar and spices and add to a salad. Use the rest in an omelette, pasta dish, soup or casserole.
- Top casseroles with slices of left-over cooked potatoes.
- Use extra cut-up fruit to top cereal, pancakes or waffles, or mix fruit with yogurt or cottage cheese. Add extra fruit to baked goods such as muffins.
- Peel and freeze overripe bananas and use in loafs and muffins.
- If you bought too much fruit, use the leftovers to make compote, chutney or fruit sauces (like apple sauce).
- Cook extra vegetables and puree what you don't eat with broth or milk for a quick soup.
- Add any combination of cooked vegetables into a pasta dish, gratin, salad, lasagna or quiche.

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- Freeze leftover tomato paste in little spoonfuls on a foil-lined baking sheet. Store the frozen blobs in a freezer bag and use to enrich sauces.
- Use leftover stir-fried vegetables in an omelette or a wrap.
- Blend leftover fruit into a smoothie (blend milk and fruit).

Grain Products

- Chill leftover pasta for pasta salad, soups or casseroles.
- Use extra rice in rice pudding, soups, or casseroles.
- Make individual sized pizzas using tortillas, English muffins or pita breads for the crust. Spread on some lower sodium tomato sauce and add your favourite toppings.
- Crush dried bread to make crumbs to coat chicken or fish, or as casserole topping.
- Use dried bread in bread pudding or cube as croutons (sprinkle with spices and toast in the oven) for salads or soups.

Meat and Alternatives

- Serve tomato or meat sauce over noodles one day, then add kidney beans, chopped vegetables (fresh, frozen or leftover) and chili seasoning for another meal.
- Sauté ground beef, use some in a casserole and freeze the rest for chili, pasta sauce or stuffed peppers.
- Bake larger pieces of meat such as whole chicken, ham or beef, serve hot and use the leftovers in stir-fries, hearty soups, casseroles, sandwiches or salads.
- Use chicken, tuna or egg salad in sandwich one day and stuff the extra into a tomato or a green, yellow or red pepper the next.
- Turn leftover roast and potatoes into shepherd's pie or stew.
- Turn leftover salmon into salmon cakes or use as a filling for pita with sliced tomatoes, lettuce, red peppers and cucumber.

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- Roasts can be minced and used as fillings for burritos, crepes, stuffed vegetables or cannelloni.
- Add extra liquid and sautéed onions when making pot roast for French onion soup.
- Use leftover chicken or turkey in a sandwich. Use whole slices or make chunky chicken salad by adding a little mayonnaise, celery, onion and other vegetables you enjoy.
- Leftovers can be frozen and used within two or three months. Be sure to label and date all packages, and use the oldest ones first
- Thaw frozen leftovers in the fridge, not on the counter. Eat or reheat thawed leftovers right away.
- Heat food thoroughly to at least 165°F (74°C). Check temperatures using a food thermometer.
- Ensure soups, gravies and sauces are brought up to a boil before you eat them.
- Only reheat leftovers one time. Throw away any uneaten leftovers after they have been reheated. Do not refreeze thawed leftovers.

A note on food safety:

Leftovers can spoil quickly, so take care to keep the food safe to eat:

- Promptly refrigerate leftovers in uncovered, shallow containers so they cool quickly.
- Keep leftovers in the fridge for a maximum of two to three days. Freeze leftovers if storing them for longer.

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This information is not intended to replace advice from your family doctor or dietitian.
Find a dietitian in your area at www.dietitians.ca/find.

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