

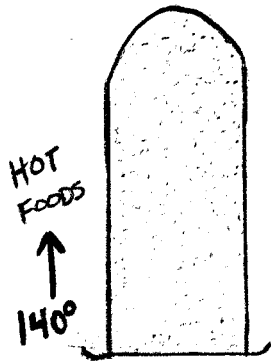
Savor The Season Safely!

A Guide to Storing Holiday Food to Enjoy Later

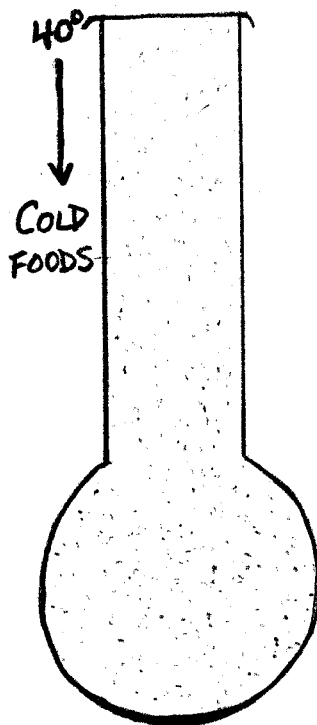
Produced by Safe Tables Our Priority

Appetites are filled and the table reflects the afterglow of a well-enjoyed feast. No matter how terrific the food, you just can't eat another bite. But tomorrow will be another story! Now, it is time to store the leftover goodies so that they can be safely enjoyed later.

The goal of packing leftovers is always to minimize the "DANGER ZONE". Bacteria grow most rapidly between 40 to 140° F, and can double in number every 20 minutes. The fewer bacteria allowed to grow, the less likely you are to get sick! The following tips can help.



DANGER ZONE!
(ROOM TEMPERATURE)



As You Pack Up:

- Refrigerate leftovers promptly in containers no more than 2 inches deep. Larger containers slow the cooling of food, allowing dangerous bacteria to grow. Freeze any leftovers that will not be consumed within a few days.
- Do not put food back into containers used for uncooked food. Containers, utensils and dishes used for raw foods, including platters, knives, and cutting boards, are not safe to reuse until they have been thoroughly washed.
- If you are keeping food ready for snacking later, keep hot food in a chafing dish or an oven set to at least 140°F. Keep cold food in the fridge or on ice.
- If moist food has been left sitting at room temperature for more than two hours, throw it away. Enough time has passed to allow potentially dangerous bacteria to multiply and produce toxins that cannot be killed by reheating.

In the Refrigerator:

- Use a thermometer to ensure that your refrigerator is at 40°F or less and your freezer is at 0° F. Do not prop the refrigerator or freezer door open, and let piping hot food cool briefly on the counter before placing in fridge or freezer.
- Store cooked and ready-to-eat foods on the upper shelves and raw foods on the bottom ones, so that the raw foods cannot drip onto the ready-to-eat foods. Make sure all containers are covered.
- Write the date on any leftovers you put in the refrigerator, and place them where you are most likely to see them, so that they can be used within a few days. (Most foods can be safely frozen indefinitely, although quality, texture and taste may suffer.)

At Serving Time:

- Before eating, reheat hot leftovers to at least 165 °F throughout for 15 seconds.
- When using a microwave, be especially careful to stir and rotate foods, as microwaves often heat food unevenly. Test several different areas of the food for doneness.
- When packing up food for lunchtime, use insulated containers or thermoses and gelpaks to keep hot food hot and cold food cold. (For more information, request S.T.O.P.'s "Bag It or Buy It" School Lunch Safety handout!)



To obtain more food safety information or join S.T.O.P.:

Safe Tables Our Priority (S.T.O.P.)

PO Box 4352, Burlington, VT 05406

(802) 863-0555 / (802) 863-3733 fax / www.SafeTables.org

Foodborne Illness Hotline: 1-800-350-STOP