

**Seasonal Eating**  
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**Inflation Fighter: Use Your Leftovers**  
**April 2023**

With economic times as they are, families need every penny of savings they can get. Managing leftovers can help save food dollars and reduce food waste. Knowing how to properly treat leftovers and how to transform leftovers can help you to use up foods safely and deliciously.

After cooking, foods should be placed in the refrigerator within 2 hours. While proper heating and reheating will kill foodborne bacteria, some foodborne bacteria produce poisons or toxins that are not destroyed by high cooking temperatures if the food is left out at room temperature for an extended period of time. An example is the foodborne bacteria *Staphylococcus*. This bacterium produces a toxin that can develop in cooked foods that sit out at room temperature for more than two hours.



Leftover cooked food may be stored in the refrigerator for up to three to four days. During this time, you can reheat the leftovers to 165 °F. to safely eat. Be sure to return any unused portion to the refrigerator within two hours after heating to remain safe.

After each reheating, leftovers will be safe in the fridge for an additional three to four days. However, because the quality decreases each time food is reheated, it is best to reheat only the amount needed. Cooked foods that cannot be used within four days should be frozen for longer, safe storage. Leftovers are safe in the freezer indefinitely, but they are at best quality for a few months.

While simply reheating the original leftovers is one way to use them up, sometimes it's good to transform the leftovers into another dish. Leftover vegetables can be frozen together and when you have enough, make a pot of vegetable soup with beef broth and a can of tomatoes. Leftover cooked beans are great in Mexican dishes like tacos, burritos and quesadillas. Leftover rice can be combined with cooked ground beef and canned tomatoes for stuffed pepper filling. Leftover meats like beef or pork roast can be chopped up and added to chili or leftover chicken can be shredded and added to soups or casseroles.

Baked ham is a spring favorite, and the ham salad below is a great way to transform the leftover ham. You can serve the salad in a hollowed-out tomato or on a lettuce leaf with carrot and celery sticks or use it in a sandwich or spread on crackers.

So, make the most of your food dollars and use those leftovers. April 10-14 is Food Waste Awareness Week. The Extension office will be accepting food donations to go to Good Samaritan Food Pantry during business hours this week. Call the Extension Office for more information at 931-684-5971. For more information and recipes check out the Seasonal Eating page at [bedford.tennessee.edu](http://bedford.tennessee.edu).

## **Ham Salad**

1 pound fully cooked boneless ham, cut into chunks

1/2 cup sweet pickle relish

3/4 cup mayonnaise

1/4 teaspoon dill weed

1 teaspoon celery seeds

3/4 teaspoon prepared mustard

1/2 teaspoon horseradish

1/2 teaspoon lemon juice

1/8 teaspoon black pepper

2-3 hard cooked eggs, peeled and chopped

Process ham, in batches, in a food processor until coarsely ground, stopping to scrape down sides as needed (or finely chop by hand). Place ground ham in a bowl. Stir in relish, mayonnaise, dill weed, celery seeds, mustard, horseradish, lemon juice and pepper. Fold in chopped eggs. Chill and serve.