

## **Large Turkey-Small Gathering: What to Do With Leftover Turkey**

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Traditionally, Thanksgiving turkey dinner is served to a large crowd, but in the age of Covid 19 our gatherings are likely to be smaller. If you're still getting that big turkey to cook your annual Thanksgiving feast, here are some ideas of what to do with your leftover turkey.

First and foremost, consider food safety. Perishable food should not be left at room temperature for longer than 2 hours. As a general rule, use left-overs within 3 to 4 days for food safety and best quality. Freeze for longer storage.

Cut all the turkey off the bone, even if you're not going to eat it all at once. Slice the breast so you can use it for sandwiches. The meat that can't be sliced for sandwiches can be diced for use in soups, stews and casseroles. Refrigerate what you won't be serving before you sit down for dinner, so it won't be at room temperature for too long. After dinner or the next day freeze what you won't use within 3-4 days.

To prevent freezer burn, put leftover turkey in a vapor-moisture resistant packaging, such as freezer quality plastic bags, or wrap in freezer foil or paper, or place in an appropriate size rigid freezer container made of plastic or metal. Glass or ceramic containers can be used, if labeled safe for freezer use. Package it in serving sizes, so you don't have to thaw too much at once.

The University of Illinois Extension has an excellent website, Turkey for the Holidays, that's full of tips for purchasing, thawing, cooking, carving, side dishes, food safety and recipes for leftovers. You can start at <https://web.extension.illinois.edu/turkey/>, or skip to the recipes below.

**Homemade Turkey Bone Broth** Don't waste the turkey carcass, simply boil it with aromatic vegetables and herbs. This recipe from the University of Illinois Extension is easy and basic. <https://web.extension.illinois.edu/turkey/bonebroth.cfm>

**Shredded Turkey Stew** You can use your homemade turkey broth in this recipe. <https://web.extension.illinois.edu/turkey/posole.cfm>

**Turkey Mushroom Pot Pie** Your leftover vegetables can be added to this recipe. <https://web.extension.illinois.edu/turkey/potpie.cfm>

**Turkey Black Bean Wraps** Try this recipe for a nice southwest flavor. <https://web.extension.illinois.edu/turkey/wraps.cfm>

For leftover mashed potatoes consider making **Mashed Potato Herb Soup**. <https://web.extension.illinois.edu/turkey/soups.cfm>

