

Turkey Day-After
By Ora Emmerich
UCCE El Dorado County Master Food Preservers
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So, we've all had enough of our Thanksgiving favorites to stuff, well, a turkey! Now, what do we do with all those leftovers? The freezer is your friend for preserving a little bit of Thanksgiving to enjoy when the wonderful memories of this family holiday begin to fade. Many of our favorites can be frozen successfully, including turkey, green beans and even pumpkin pie.

The general instructions for freezing apply to all foods. Freezing will not make the food fresher, so the quality of the food before freezing will determine the quality of the food after freezing, if proper techniques are used. Packaging must be air-tight and appropriate for the food. The two main types of freezer packaging, rigid containers and flexible wraps, come in models made specifically for freezing. Plastic freezer bags, a good choice for irregularly shaped foods, can be found readily and make packaging food for freezing relatively easy. Whichever type of container you choose, be sure to remove as much air as possible from the container after filling with the food. Leave room for the food to expand, especially if you use rigid containers and fill with food that contains a lot of liquid. Remember to always keep your freezer set at 0° F or lower. Also, freeze foods in amounts that can be frozen within 24 hours, which will usually be about 2-3 lbs. of food for each cubic foot of freezer space. Reheat all frozen foods to 165° F to insure safety.

Cooked turkey freezes better when combined with a sauce, so keep some of the leftover gravy to freeze. The University of Missouri Extension recommends the following for freezing cooked meats: "Cooked meat will dry out much faster than fresh meat in the freezer if it is not covered with some kind of sauce, gravy or broth. The liquid fills up the air spaces and prevents drying by protecting the meat from exposure to the air. Even cooked meats frozen in liquid should be kept a shorter time than fresh meats — no longer than three months."

The fun website, Greenbeansnmore.com, contains everything you always wanted to know about green beans. The web site advice for freezing green beans makes it easy.

"Freezing is accomplished in a few very simple steps.

- 1) Choose the freshest green beans you can find.
- 2) Rinse your green beans in cool water. Drain.
- 3) Cut the ends of the beans off. Cut the beans to whatever length you prefer.
- 4) Put the green beans into rapidly boiling water, cover the pot and boil them for 3 minutes. (You can re-use this water three to five times - but make sure it's brought back to a rolling boil).
- 5) Use a large slotted spoon to remove the green beans from the boiling water and immediately plunge them into a bowl of ice water to stop the cooking. Keep them in the ice water for 3 minutes. Drain them well.
- 6) If you have a FoodSaver a great time to use it is right now. If you don't, put the green beans into ziplock freezer bags. Make sure you get as much air out of the ziplock bag as possible to help prevent freezer burn.

7) Get ready to enjoy farm fresh green beans whenever you want!”

Save that pumpkin pie by wrapping well in plastic wrap. If you freeze the whole pie, the University of Illinois Cooperative Extension Service recommends “*To serve:* Unwrap the pie and thaw 50 minutes at 300° F with paper plate over the top of the pie.” Pieces of pie may be frozen individually for a delicious treat. Wrap each slice well or place in a freezer bag and remove as much air as possible. To serve, unwrap and place in a covered oven proof container. Then, heat at 300° F until pie reaches 165° F.

Enjoy your Thanksgiving holiday favorites anytime, thanks to your freezer. If you have any more questions about freezing foods, call the UCCE Master Food Preservers of El Dorado County. Master Food Preservers are available to answer home food preservation questions; leave a message at (530) 621-5506. The Master Food Preservers also sponsor free public classes. For more information about the public education classes and activities, go to the Master Food Preserver website at http://ceeldorado.ucdavis.edu/Master_Food_Preservers/.