WASTE LESS, TASTE MORE 017

# Know the Window for Another Meal



PLAN THE NEXT USE WHILE THE FOOD IS STILL GOOD.

Extra food from a dinner party needs a timely plan. For properly handled cooked steak, fish, chicken, and vegetables, use the general refrigerated-leftover guideline of three to four days, or freeze earlier for another occasion. Keep the refrigerator at 40°F or below.

### 1 Start with the original cooking day

Record when the food was cooked, including anything prepared ahead of the party.

**Why:** A dish cooked the day before guests arrive has already spent part of its storage window in the refrigerator.

### 2 Decide between the refrigerator and freezer

Keep food refrigerated when you have a near-term use. If another meal is unlikely within the recommended window, freeze it promptly.

**Why:** Choosing early gives you a clear plan rather than a last-minute decision.

### 3 Keep raw and cooked guidance separate

Use storage recommendations that match the food's condition. Raw chicken, raw steak, and cooked leftovers do not all have the same refrigerator limits.

**Why:** "It is meat" is not enough information to choose a storage time.

## KITCHEN NOTES

### Plan the sandwich or soup now

A specific next-day meal is easier to follow through on.

### Do not rely on smell alone

Use the food's handling history and storage time when deciding whether to keep it.

### Freezing cannot undo poor handling

Only save food that has been handled safely.

**THE PLATING MINDSET**

Good planning gives extra food a timely return to the table.

Storage guidance: USDA FSIS / FoodSafety.gov (linked in PDF)