

Reduce food waste and stay safe this Christmas

We have teamed up with Love Food Hate Waste to compile top tips and innovative recipes so your festive feasts can go further and not result in unwelcome illness.

David Alexander, FSA Head of General Food Hygiene Policy, said: 'When it comes to food safety, cooking, freezing and defrosting poultry can be confusing. At Christmas, turkey is still our favourite festive food, but people often throw away their leftovers, rather than using them up in a safe way.'

Helen White, from Love Food Hate Waste, added: 'We've all got lots on our minds during the festive season, and throwing away food can get pushed to one side by other things! The cost of binning food can add up quickly, both in terms of the money you waste and the damage this has on the environment. With these top tips, and a bit of clever planning, you can avoid throwing away hundreds of pounds of perfectly good uneaten food – and not just at Christmas.'

Tip 1: keep your Christmas cool

Double check your fridge is set at 5°C or below and test this with a fridge thermometer. Food within its use-by date and kept according to storage instructions, will stay fresher for longer. Always store raw meats and ready-to-eat food, such as fresh fruit and cooked meat, separately to avoid cross-contamination.

Tip 2: get to know your dates

Understanding the difference between 'best before' and 'use-by' dates means you can avoid throwing away good food unnecessarily. Best before is about quality: food will be safe to eat after this date, but may no longer be at its best. Use-by is about safety: food shouldn't be eaten, cooked or frozen after this date, as it could be unsafe – even if it looks and smells fine.

Tip 3: get your festive freeze on

80% of people have thrown away food that was close to its use-by date without realising they could freeze it and keep it for later. It is safe to freeze food right up until the use-by date.

Tip 4: love your leftovers

There are endless ways to reinvent Christmas leftovers. Cool them, cover them and put them in the fridge or freezer within one to two hours. Check out these delicious and inventive Christmas leftover recipes from Love Food Hate Waste. Remember leftovers should be eaten or frozen within 2 days (1 day for rice dishes).

Tip 5: know your reheating rules

Once food is defrosted, you will need to eat it within 24 hours. Remember that previously cooked and frozen meat should only be reheated once. However, you can safely cook defrosted meat into a new meal and freeze that dish for use another day. For example, you can buy your turkey frozen, defrost it, cook it and use the leftovers in a curry, which itself can be frozen to eat and enjoy another day.

For more information, please visit [our Christmas advice](#).