Wellness Snapshot

Reducing food waste during the holidays



When we think of the holidays, a surplus of delicious food often comes to mind. But with all that food, there's bound to be some food waste – even those coveted leftovers often get consigned to the garbage if they aren't eaten in a day or two. Thankfully, with a little advance planning you can serve up a delicious and satisfying holiday feast with little to no food waste.

- **Take stock before you shop:** Be aware of the foods you have on hand and want to use up before going to the grocery store. Apply the 'First in First Out' principle to ensure you use older foods first.
- **Plan your meals:** Whether you are hosting extended friends and family or cooking for two, plan your meal in advance to reduce impulse buys. When you have your plan, write out a grocery list before going to the grocery store.
- **Estimate your guests' consumption:** Cook with a clear estimate for how much will realistically be consumed. For example, you can estimate 1 pound of turkey (or less) per person and approximately ½ cup per person of starchy sides like potatoes, stuffing, carrots, etc.
- **Avoid buying in bulk (or portion if you do):** Research supports that the larger the portions we buy, the more we consume and likely waste. Therefore, be sure to portion bulk purchases like meats or vegetables into smaller quantities that can be frozen for another occasion.
- **Tell guests what they can bring:** You might need a dessert or an extra vegetable dish. If you are planning on preparing a variety of dishes yourself, you might simply ask your guests to bring storage containers for leftovers. Communicating what you need (or don't need) will help reduce the excess.
- **Get creative with leftovers:** Leftover meats can be incorporated into casseroles, wraps, soups, or salads. Extra vegetables can be added to sauces or stews, and leftover bread can be used to make breadcrumbs, french toast, croutons, or bread pudding. You can also freeze meals that you made with leftover ingredients to increase longevity. Remember that leftovers can be stored in the fridge for 3-4 days but will last frozen for 4-6 months.