

# Standard Operating Procedure (SOP): Proper Storage and Labeling of Leftover Food Items

This SOP details the **proper storage and labeling of leftover food items**, focusing on safe handling, appropriate container selection, labeling with dates and contents, storage temperature guidelines, and methods to prevent cross-contamination. The goal is to maintain food safety, minimize waste, and ensure leftovers remain fresh and identifiable for future use.

## 1. Safe Handling of Leftover Food

- Wash hands thoroughly with soap and water before handling leftovers.
- Use clean utensils, cutting boards, and surfaces.
- Allow hot foods to cool slightly at room temperature (no more than 2 hours) before refrigerating or freezing.

## 2. Appropriate Container Selection

- Use clean, food-grade containers with tight-fitting lids.
- Prefer transparent or semi-transparent containers for easy viewing.
- Avoid overfilling; leave space for air circulation if freezing.
- Choose appropriate sizes to minimize unused space.

## 3. Labeling Leftover Food Items

- Clearly label each container with:
  - Name of the food item
  - Date of storage (MM/DD/YYYY)
  - Optional: Allergens and expiry/use-by date
- Use waterproof labels and permanent markers that withstand refrigeration/freezing.

Sample Label	Example
Food Name	Beef Stew
Date Stored	06/17/2024
Allergens	Wheat, Dairy
Use-By	06/21/2024

## 4. Storage Temperature Guidelines

- Refrigerate perishable leftovers within 2 hours (1 hour if above 90°F/32°C ambient temperature).
- Set refrigerators at or below 40°F (4°C).
- Set freezers at or below 0°F (-18°C).
- Do not refreeze foods that have been fully thawed.
- Arrange foods so that air circulates freely.

## 5. Preventing Cross-Contamination

- Store ready-to-eat foods above raw meats in the refrigerator.
- Use separate containers and utensils for different types of food.

- Never return previously stored leftovers to the original serving dish.

## 6. Monitoring & Disposal

- Regularly review stored leftovers and dispose of any showing signs of spoilage or past the use-by date.
- Document discards as required by facility policy.

## 7. Responsibilities

- All kitchen staff are responsible for following this SOP.
- Supervisors must ensure compliance and provide necessary training.

**Reviewed By:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_