

A bird at Christmas is traditional for many, but some new ideas for the leftovers never hurt — say, a turkey curry, or chili, or lasagna

Warm up to cold turkey

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Preparing for Christmas dinner, some turkey shoppers deliberately buy a larger turkey than they need. They like the leftovers almost as much as the festive, freshly roasted bird.

That's certainly the custom in my family. After dinner, my daughters attack the turkey, carving off all remaining meat, scooping out stuffing, and stashing the carcass in the refrigerator for stock-making. They make off with bags containing their share of leftovers, leaving me enough for a dinner and a couple of sandwiches. The cranberry sauce gets divided up, too. Boxing Day, we all relax over some of the best cold meat of the year.

Some cooks deliberately make extra stuffing, baking it in a casserole alongside the turkey. The next day, they combine it with equal amounts of leftover mashed potatoes, some eggs, and a little flour to make patties, or croquettes, to fry in oil.

Once you have your turkey stock made, use it as the base of a root-vegetable soup; it becomes a meal in one if you add cubes of turkey. How about a casserole? Cook chopped onion and celery in butter or oil, stir in some stock and milk until it thickens, zap it up with a shot of sherry and pour it over cubes of turkey and freshly cooked noodles. Grate some good cheese — an aged cheddar or parmesan — over the top, then bake for 30 minutes at 350 degrees F (180C).

If you like to taste the full turkey flavour, keep the additions mild. And never give in to a temptation I failed to resist one year, when I stirred cranberry sauce into a cream sauce for a turkey casserole. No one wanted to eat something that looked like raspberries.

I thought I would ask some Montreal chefs for leftover-turkey ideas. Some were surprised by the challenge of using the cold remnants of this bird in their respective cuisines, but they were game to experiment. At Sahib Indian Pub in Pointe Claire, Rajiv Chopra answered our challenge with a curry. "Spice some life into your leftover turkey," he recommended.

At Mesquite, the new Décarie Blvd. restaurant specializing in the smoky, spicy flavours of the American Southwest, Michael Minorgan made turkey leftovers into a version of the Red River Chili he usually makes with beef.

And chef Renato Ferrante of Ristorante Da Vinci on Bishop St. made a turkey version of his deluxe lasagna, even adding mascarpone cheese to enrich the sauce.



Rajiv Chopra, owner of Sahib Indian Pub in Pointe Claire, rose to the challenge of creating an Indian dish with leftover Christmas turkey. His recipe for turkey curry is on Page D3.

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