



Newspaper Article

Going Cold Turkey—
Or, the Joys of Cold Cuisine
the Day after the Night Before

The Georgetowner

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If my mother and I both live to be one hundred, we will still be an oven apart when it comes to preparing leftovers. “If you serve it hot, you re-serve it hot.” Period. End of culinary quote from my mother. But one steamy Sloppy Joe does not necessarily deserve another. So I’ll put the leftovers of my second “Joe” in cold storage until the crack of dawn tomorrow.

It’s 7 a.m. and I’m rushing off to the office way behind schedule. One foot dutifully faces the direction of the back door while the other turns magnetized and helpless toward the refrigerator. I’m starving with no time to cook. But to pick at something, well, that’s a horse-radish of a different color.

Peering into fridge, I feel like a kid on Christmas morn. Crayon-bright containers everywhere but where’s the beef? Maybe in the yellow margarine tub, no, just yellow margarine. Maybe in the big, blue jobbie, oh, just one lonely egg Benedict, but Lord, not eggs again for breakfast! Aha, it’s there in the round, red container. Underneath that Snappy-Seal lid is my leftover Sloppy Joe complete with soggy roll and runny slaw. So gauche and yet so grand in all its American Pop glory. Just to look at it would give my mother the vapors, but to me it looks like an Andy Warhol work of art.

Lifting a lovely forkful, a frantic shrill is followed by my visiting mother wielding a double boiler. Cool it, Mom! Everything does not have to be cooked to a slow death. Why must you re-roast the roast that you roasted yesterday? She constantly reminds me not to live in the past. So why eat in the past?

My mother has very definite ideas about eating cold food and she’s always willing to share them unsolicited, and just when I’m about to fall face-first into a cold pizza. Her reasons seem logical to her, “Food should be reheated because, well, because it just doesn’t taste good old.”

Or, "Eating cold food, it just sounds terrible." With the exception of Rice Krispies, I really don't care how my food sounds. "Furthermore," insists my mother, "cold leftovers look yucky."

But what could be more beautiful at 4 a.m. than the sight of a forgotten box of chilly Chinese leftovers? And there it is in all its take-out glory, the ubiquitous white folded carton. Chomping at the bit for the bite that might remain, I unfold the closure. Taste buds take flight! It's Sweet and Sour Pork with all the blended flavors about to explode like colors on a Jackson Pollock canvas.

If you still have cold feet about cold food, try a different train of thought. You freak out for fried chicken both hot or picnic cold, right? Mary, one of my associates, says a cold hot dog sandwich with a club soda is her fav snack food. First, she slathers a slice of Swedish rye bread with spicy brown mustard. Then she cuts the dogs into thick wheels, careful to line them up in straight, close rows on top of the mustard. "Never cut cold dogs lengthwise," stresses Mary, "They just don't taste the same."

How's about cold lasagna? Careful. This one tends to hook the beginner. After making like the big, bad wolf, huffing and puffing to cool your dinner lasagna, put the deep dish of leftovers on ice until tomorrow night. Assuming you have not eaten like all three little pigs combined, (like me) you'll probably have a food fantasy all day long. By din-din your desperate. Forget reheating. There's no time. Grab the dish and plunge your fork through the cheesy layers. You're hooked. No more culinary cruise control for you.

Some like it hot, no matter what. But the cold, hard truth is that cold food makes sense. Eating from the fridge saves dirty dishes (in my case, paper plates). And economizes on water, soap, dish towels and save mucho time that I could otherwise spend arguing with my mother. How about no pots to scorch, no pots to clean. And you'll never again burn your tongue on a peperoni pizza with gobs of boiling cheese. Oh yes. I think I read somewhere that cold food has fewer calories. Not to mention cold food helps eliminate noise pollution from slurping and blowing.

After all is said and done (not too well done, thank you), I'll always choose leftover cold cuisine. It's hot stuff!