

COOKING SAFETY FOR THANKSGIVING

During the holidays, Fire Rescue responds to a lot of emergencies due to accidents in the kitchen. We receive calls for burns, airway obstructions from food and, of course, cooking fires. A lot of these emergencies can be avoided by being careful when cooking and eating meals.

Use pot holders and oven gloves when handling hot pots and pans to help prevent burns. You should also wear gloves when using turkey fryers that can splatter hot grease, even when using them appropriately. NEVER, EVER use a turkey fryer inside a structure, as the hot grease can catch class A combustibles (wood, paper, cabinets...etc.) on fire very easily. Eat slowly and chew your food well to prevent choking or airway obstructions. With all of the food we cook for the holidays, we tend to get into a rush and not chew our food well. Most importantly, NEVER leave ovens, stoves or any cooking appliance unattended, as many fires start because people forget to turn off the stove or oven when they leave home.

How to Properly Use a Turkey Fryer

The latest tasty turkey trend is deep frying. However, deep frying a turkey does involve some unique dangers and if you don't take the proper precautions, you may end up with a serious injury or fire. Deep fryers can be hazardous because:

- Many units easily tip over, spilling the five gallons of hot oil within the cooking pot.
- If the cooking pot is overfilled with oil, the oil may spill out of the unit when the turkey is placed into the cooking pot. Oil may hit the burner/flames causing a fire to engulf the entire unit.
- Partially frozen turkeys placed into the fryer can cause a spillover effect. This too, may result in an extensive fire.
- With no thermostat controls, the units also have the potential to overheat the oil to the point of combustion.
- The sides of the pot, lid and handles get dangerously hot, posing severe burn hazards.

Cooking Your Turkey

- Follow your fryer's instructions.
- Only deep fry smaller turkeys-up to 12 pounds.
- Use oils with high smoke points such as peanut, canola and safflower. Peanut oil adds flavor, but it can be a concern if guests have peanut allergies.
- To determine how much oil you'll need, put the turkey in the basket and place it in the pot. Add water until it reaches one to two inches above the turkey. Lift the turkey out, and use a ruler to measure the distance from the water to the top of the fryer. Pour out the water and dry the fryer completely.
- Remember that it can take anywhere from 20 minutes to an hour to heat the oil, depending on the outside temperature, wind and weather.
- Before frying, pat the turkey dry with paper towels to keep the hot oil from splattering and popping.
- Slowly lower the turkey into the oil, and maintain an oil temp of 350°F. Fry turkey for three to four minutes per pound or about 35 to 42 minutes for a 10- to 12-pound turkey.

General Turkey Fryer Safety Tips

- Turkey fryers should always be used outdoors at a safe distance from buildings and any other material that can burn.
- Never use turkey fryers on wooden decks or in garages.
- Make sure the fryers are used on a flat surface to reduce accidental tipping.
- Never leave the fryer unattended. Most units do not have thermostat controls, so if you don't watch the fryer carefully, the oil will continue to heat until it catches fire.
- Never let children or pets near the fryer when in use or even after you are finished cooking. The oil inside the cooking pot can remain dangerously hot for hours after use.
- To avoid oil spillover, do not overfill the fryer.
- Use well-insulated potholders or oven mitts when touching pot or lid handles. If possible, wear safety goggles to protect your eyes from oil splatter.
- Make sure the turkey is completely thawed and be careful with marinades. Oil and water don't mix and water causes oil to spill over, creating a fire or even an explosion hazard.
- The National Turkey Federation recommends refrigerator thawing and to allow approximately 24 hours for every five pounds of bird thawed in the refrigerator.
- **Keep an all-purpose fire extinguisher nearby. Never use water to extinguish a grease fire. Remember to use your best judgment when attempting to fight a fire. If the fire is manageable, use an all-purpose fire extinguisher. If the fire increases, immediately call 9-1-1 for help.**

Martin County Fire Rescue wishes you a very safe and Happy Thanksgiving!