

THANKSGIVING SAFETY TIPS FOR FRYING TURKEYS



It's that time of year again when family and friends gather around the table for the Thanksgiving Day feast. It's a time to loosen the belts and overdose on turkey, Thanksgiving Day parades and of course FOOTBALL.

It's also one of the busiest days of the year for the nation's firefighters.

The United States Fire Administration reports that fires in residential buildings occur most frequently in the afternoon on Thanksgiving Day between the hours of noon to 4 PM. This is the time when most families are preparing the traditional feast.

Over the past decade, the popularity of deep fried turkeys for Thanksgiving has grown all across the country but especially here in the south. This fantastic method of cooking turkeys requires very strict safety measures to be successful.

The most common method of frying a turkey is placing the bird in a large pot filled with cooking oil and then placing the pot on a gas burner which is usually fueled

by a portable propane bottle. If not done properly, this method can lead to serious injuries and has been the source of many Thanksgiving Day fires.

There are many different cooking oils on the market but the one that appears to be the most popular is peanut oil.

Like most all cooking oils, peanut oil, if heated to a high enough temperature, will ignite like any other flammable liquid. According to most of the cooking directions for frying a turkey, the suggested temperature to fry a turkey is approximately 350 degrees.

Think about this for a minute. All cooking oils have what is known as its “smoke point.” That is the temperature at which the oil starts to release smoke. The smoke point for peanut oil is approximately 450-500 degrees. When the oil reaches this temperature it is very close to what is known as “auto-ignition.” That means it can burst into flames without any help from an actual flame. If the temperature of the cooking oil is not monitored and controlled constantly, the oil will reach the auto-ignition temperature very quickly and ignite the surface of the cooking oil. The resulting fire is usually very large and if fanned by the wind, it grows even faster and becomes more intense. This scenario has been the cause of countless Thanksgiving Day fires, resulting in millions of dollars in damages, not to mention injuries and in some cases, death.

The following are few safety tips from the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission on frying a turkey and living to tell about it:

1. Keep fryer in FULL VIEW while burner is on
2. Place fryer in an open area AWAY from all walls, fences, or other structures.
3. Never use IN, ON or UNDER a garage, breezeway, carpet, porch, or any structure that can catch fire.
4. Raise and lower food SLOWLY to reduce splatter and avoid burns.
5. COVER bare skin when adding or removing food.
6. Check the oil temperature **frequently**.
7. If the oil begins to smoke, immediately turn gas supply OFF.

8. If a fire occurs, IMMEDIATELY CALL 911. **DO NOT ATTEMPT TO EXTINGUISH THE FIRE WITH WATER.** Water will cause the fire to become larger and also will make it spread even faster.
9. Always have an all purpose fire extinguisher close by. A small, 2 ½ - 5 lbs size will be sufficient.
10. Make sure there are at least two feet of space between the liquid propane tank and the fryer.
11. Arrange the liquid propane tank and the fryer so that the wind blows the heat of the fryer away from the gas tank.
12. Make sure the fryer is on level, stable ground and the pot is centered on the burner.