

Tips to Help Prevent Accidents When Deep Frying Your Holiday Bird

Thanksgiving is a time to enjoy heartfelt traditions with family, friends, neighbors, and loved ones. A common practice at Thanksgiving is deep-frying a turkey. A deep-fried turkey is prized for its moist, juicy meat and exceptionally crispy skin, and it cooks much faster than a roasted turkey. The process results in a tender and flavorful bird that many consider more delicious than a traditional oven-baked turkey.

Horseshoe Bay Fire Chief Doug Fowler reminds residents that using a deep fryer can be hazardous. According to the National Fire Protection Association, deep fryer fires cause an average of five deaths, 60 injuries, and \$15 million in property damage each year!

However, if used correctly and with caution, using a deep fryer to cook your customary fowl can help you and yours enjoy a safe, scrumptious holiday!

“It’s paramount that those using a turkey fryer follow the manufacturer’s directions,” says Chief Fowler. “Don’t overfill the fryer. Keep it level, off backyard decks, out of garages, and at a safe distance from porches, trees, and other structures.”

The Horseshoe Bay Fire Department offers the following guidelines to cook your deep-fried bird safely.

Personal protection

- **Wear protective gear:** Wear thick, long-sleeved clothing, sturdy shoes, and well-insulated oven mitts or fry gloves.
- **Use eye protection:** Wear safety goggles to protect your eyes from oil splatter.

Setup and location

- **Location:** Use the fryer outdoors, on a flat, stable, non-flammable surface such as concrete, at a safe distance (at least 10 feet) from your home, garage, or any other structures. This includes keeping the fryer away from wooden decks, covered patios, garages, and enclosed spaces.
- **Level surface:** Place the fryer on a level surface to prevent it from tipping over, which can cause a dangerous spill.
- **Keep a safe distance:** Ensure there is at least two feet of space between the propane tank and the fryer burner.
- **Avoid hazardous areas:** Never use the fryer on a wooden deck or in a garage.

Turkey and oil preparation

- **Thaw completely:** Ensure the turkey is completely thawed and then dry it thoroughly before frying. Ice or water in the oil can cause it to boil over violently.
- **Don't overfill:** Use the manufacturer's instructions or the water displacement method to ensure the pot is not overfilled with oil, which can cause dangerous spills. Even a small amount of oil overflow can cause a large fire.

Cooking safety

- **Monitor temperature:** Use a thermometer to ensure the oil does not exceed 350°F (177°C).
- **Turn off heat:** Turn off the burner before lowering the turkey into the oil. Only re-light the burner once the turkey is fully submerged.
- **Stay attentive:** Never leave the fryer unattended!
- **Keep children and pets away:** Always ensure children and pets are at a safe distance, even after you've finished cooking, as the oil will remain dangerously hot for hours. It takes up to two hours for the oil to cool down!

Fire safety

- **Have a fire extinguisher:** Keep a multipurpose (ABC) fire extinguisher within easy reach.
- **Know what not to do:** Never use water to put out an oil fire, as it will cause a more dangerous flare-up. If a fire occurs, clear the area and call 911 immediately.

“On behalf of the City of Horseshoe Bay and the Horseshoe Bay Fire Department, we wish our community a very happy Thanksgiving,” said Chief Fowler. “Please help keep our community and firefighters safe by following these important guidelines this holiday season.”