



## Thanksgiving Hazards

By Louie Delaware

### Turkey Fryers

A longtime food favorite in the southern United States, the delicious deep-fried turkey has quickly grown in popularity thanks to celebrity chefs such as Martha Stewart and Emeril Lagasse. While some people rave about this tasty creation, Underwriters Laboratories Inc.'s (UL) safety experts are concerned that backyard chefs may be sacrificing safety for good taste.

"We're worried by the increasing reports of fires related with turkey fryer use," says John Drengenberg, UL consumer affairs manager. "Based on our test findings, the fryers used to produce those great-tasting birds are not worth the risks. And, as a result of these tests, UL has decided not to certify any turkey fryers with our trusted UL Mark."

#### Here's why using a deep-fryer can be dangerous:

- Many units easily tip over, spilling the 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 cooking pot, lid and pot handles get dangerously hot, posing severe burn hazards.

#### If you absolutely must use a turkey fryer, here are some tips for safer use:

- Make sure that you completely read the instructions before using your turkey deep fryer. As tasty as fried turkey can be, it's not worth losing your home or becoming seriously injured due to improper use of a deep fryer. Turkey fryers should always be used outdoors 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. 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. Even after use, never allow children or pets near the turkey fryer. The oil inside the cooking pot can remain dangerously hot, hours after use.
- To avoid oil spillover, do not overfill the fryer.
- Use well-insulated potholders or oven mitts when touching





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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, causing 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.
- Even after use, never allow children or pets near the turkey fryer. The oil inside the cooking pots remains dangerously hot, hours after use.

UL is providing video footage/still images of turkey fryers under test. The following file is in MPEG format, and is approximately 13Mb in size.

[Click here](#) to download the movie.

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The comforting glow of candles around the home may invoke the warm holiday spirit, but they are a significant fire hazard. If you choose to set the mood with candles, never leave them burning unattended. Take extra care to supervise children (and pets) if candles grace your holiday table and extinguish them when you leave the room, even for a minute.

Choking is another prevalent hazard at Thanksgiving. Crudités and other appetizers, including those containing relishes, raw vegetables, olives, grapes, nuts and cheese cubes, can be dangerous for young children who may not be able to chew them adequately. Keep these nibblers out of their reach, unless supervised by an adult, to prevent choking.

Children get just as excited about the Thanksgiving meal as adults do. When you stick those kids at the kiddie table, cut their food for them into small, chewable pieces, key an eye on them and remind them often to chew their food thoroughly.

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- ◆ Have a fire extinguisher available not more than 10 feet from the stove, on the exit side of the room.
  - ◆ A 2-1/2 lb. class ABC multi-purpose dry chemical extinguisher is recommended. Know how to use your fire extinguisher.
  - ◆ Keep the kitchen off-limits to young children and adults that are not helping with food preparations to lessen the possibility of kitchen mishaps.
  - ◆ When cooking, do not wear clothing with loose sleeves or dangling jewelry. The clothing can catch on fire and the jewelry can catch on pot handles, causing spills and burns.



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- ◆ Cook on the back burners when possible and turn pot handles in so they don't extend over the edge of the stove.
- ◆ Never leave cooking unattended. If you must leave the kitchen while cooking, turn off the stove or have someone else watch what is being cooked.
- ◆ Keep Thanksgiving decorations and kitchen clutter away from sources of direct heat.
- ◆ Candles are often part of holiday decorations. Candles should never be left burning when you are away from home, or after going to bed. Candles should be located where children will not be tempted to play with them, and where guests will not accidentally brush against them. The candle holder should be completely noncombustible and difficult to knock over. The candle should not have combustible decorations around it.

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