

Product Safety Tips:

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:

- 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 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.