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Cooking

Turkey fryers

NFPA discourages the use of outdoor gas-fueled turkey fryers that immerse the turkey in hot oil. These turkey fryers use a substantial quantity of cooking oil at high temperatures, and units currently available for home use pose a significant danger that hot oil will be released at some point during the cooking process. The use of turkey fryers by consumers can lead to devastating burns, other injuries and the destruction of property. NFPA urges those who prefer fried turkey to seek out professional establishments, such as grocery stores, specialty food retailers, and restaurants for the preparation of the dish, or consider a new type of "oilless" turkey fryer."



- Hot oil may splash or spill at any point during the cooking process, when the fryer is jarred or tipped over, the turkey is placed in the fryer or removed, or the turkey is moved from the fryer to the table. Any contact between hot oil and skin could result in serious injury. Any contact between hot oil and nonmetallic materials could lead to serious damage.
- A major spill of hot oil can occur with fryers designed for outdoor use and using a stand as these units are particularly vulnerable to upset or collapse, followed by a major spill of hot oil. Newer countertop units using a solid base appear to reduce this particular risk. NFPA does not believe that consumer education alone can make the risks of either type of turkey fryer acceptably low because of the large quantities of hot oil involved and the speed and severity of burn likely to occur with contact.
- In deep frying, oil is heated to temperatures of 350 degrees Fahrenheit or more. Cooking oil is combustible, and if it is heated beyond its cooking temperature, its vapors can ignite. This is a fire danger separate from the burn danger inherent in the hot oil. Overheating can occur if temperature controls, which are designed to shut off the fryer if the oil overheats, are defective, or if the appliance has no temperature controls.
- Propane-fired turkey fryers are designed for outdoor use, particularly for Thanksgiving, by which time both rain and snow are common in many parts of the country. If rain or snow strikes exposed hot cooking oil, the result can be a splattering of the hot oil or a conversion of the rain or snow to steam, either of which can lead to burns. Use of propane-fired turkey fryers indoors to avoid bad weather is contrary to their design and dangerous in its own right. Also, moving an operating turkey fryer indoors to escape bad weather is extremely risky. Fires have occurred when turkey fryers were used in a garage or barn or under eaves to keep the appliance out of the rain.
- The approximately 5 gallons of oil in these devices introduce an additional level of hazard to deep fryer cooking, as does the size and weight of the turkey, which must be safely lowered into and raised out of the large quantity of hot oil. Many turkeys are purchased frozen, and they may not be fully thawed when cooking begins. As with a rainy day, a defrosting turkey creates the risk of contact between hot cooking oil.
- There is a new outdoor turkey cooking appliance that does not use oil. NFPA believes these should be considered as an alternative. NFPA understands that this appliance will be listed by a recognized testing laboratory.

NFPA continues to believe that turkey fryers that use oil, as currently designed, are not suitable for acceptably safe use by even a well-informed and careful consumer. Consumers may find packaging of turkey fryers displaying independent product safety testing labels. NFPA is familiar with the details of these test standards and does not believe that they are sufficiently comprehensive regarding the different ways in which serious harm can occur, and, in some cases, regarding the different parts of the turkey fryer that need to be tested.

NFPA does not test, label or approve any products.
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