

November: Happy Thanksgiving

Thanksgiving Safety

For most, the kitchen is the heart of the home, especially during the holidays. From testing family recipes to decorating cakes and cookies, everyone enjoys being part of the preparations.

So, keeping fire safety top of mind in the kitchen during this joyous but hectic time is important, especially when there's a lot of activity and people at home. As you start preparing your holiday schedule and organizing that large family feast, remember, by following a few simple safety tips you can enjoy time with your loved ones and keep yourself and your family safer from fire.

Thanksgiving by the numbers:

Thanksgiving is the peak day for home cooking fires, followed by Christmas Day and Christmas Eve.

In 2015, U.S. fire departments responded to an estimated 1,760 home cooking fires on Thanksgiving, the peak day for such fires.

Unattended cooking was by far the leading contributing factor in cooking fires and fire deaths.

Cooking equipment was involved in almost half (48%) of all reported home fires and civilian and tied with heating equipment for the second leading cause of home fire deaths.

Source: NFPA's Fire Analysis & Research Division



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Safety Tips

Safety tips

- Stay in the kitchen when you are cooking on the stove-top so you can keep an eye on the food.
- Stay in the home when cooking your turkey and check on it frequently.
- Keep children away from the stove. The stove will be hot and kids should stay 3 feet away.
- Make sure kids stay away from hot food and liquids. The steam or splash from vegetables, gravy or coffee could cause serious burns.
- Keep the floor clear so you don't trip over kids, toys, pocketbooks or bags.
- Keep knives out of the reach of children.
- Be sure electric cords from an electric knife, coffee maker, plate warmer or mixer are not dangling off the counter within easy reach of a child.
- Keep matches and utility lighters out of the reach of children — up high in a locked cabinet.
- Never leave children alone in room with a lit candle.
- Make sure your smoke alarms are working. Test them by pushing the test button.



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Food Safety Tips for Thanksgiving

Enjoy your favorite Thanksgiving foods safely by following best food handling and cooking practices.

- Make sure to wash your hands thoroughly before preparing food, after handling any raw poultry or meat and before eating.
- Keep your food preparation surfaces and utensils clean and sanitized to reduce the risk of salmonella poisoning.
- Use separate cutting boards - one for meat, poultry and fish and one for cooked foods, vegetables and fruits. Sanitize the cutting board after each use.
- Wash all vegetables and fruits before you prepare them.
- Thaw a frozen turkey safely in the refrigerator allowing 3-4 days for thawing or approximately one day for every five pounds. Another way to safely thaw a frozen turkey is submerging it in cold water. Replace the water every 30 minutes until the turkey is thawed. This method takes approximately 30 minutes for each pound the turkey weighs. The Food Safety website provides a useful turkey thawing chart and a turkey roasting chart.
- Refrigerate a thawed, or fresh, turkey for no longer than two days before cooking.
- Immediately cook a small turkey that is defrosted in the microwave.
- If you cook your stuffing inside the turkey, stuff it just before roasting.
- Always use a meat thermometer to see if the turkey is completely cooked. The temperature needs to reach 180 degrees Fahrenheit when inserted in the thickest area of the thigh.
- Refrigerate all leftovers within two hours after cooking.
- Leftovers should be eaten within three or four days. If you are going to freeze leftovers, do that right away, not after they have been refrigerated for several days.

Keep Your Pets Safe

Many people enjoy sharing some of their Thanksgiving meal with their pets. However, it is important to be aware of the dangers that may exist to ensure your favorite furry friends enjoy a safe Thanksgiving.

- Never give your dog or cat raw or undercooked turkey as they, like people, are susceptible to salmonella bacteria. Make sure their holiday turkey nibbles are well cooked.
- Do not give your pets stuffing since herbs, such as sage, even in small amounts can cause an upset stomach and gastrointestinal problems.
- Never give your pets turkey bones.
- Never give a pet raw bread dough. The dough expands once it is eaten, causing vomiting, pain and bloating. Surgery may be required to correct the condition.
- Keep the kitchen trash can covered and out of the way of curious pets.
- Keep fresh flowers and plants out of the reach of cats and dogs. Many beautiful flowers are highly toxic to pets if ingested.



Fire Prevention

According to the United States Fire Administration, each year on Thanksgiving Day there are more than 4,000 fires in homes across the country. The number of cooking fires that occur on Thanksgiving is more than double the number of fires that occurs on an average day. Follow critical fire safety tips to avoid this type of problem.

Stay Healthy and Happy

Thanksgiving holiday safety tips help you be aware of ways to keep your family healthy and happy during this special time of year.

Resources: NFPA, Good Housekeeping and MA Education