



MEDIA RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Thanksgiving Tips from Knox County

Safety tips on preparing turkey and where to dispose of used cooking oil

KNOXVILLE, Tenn. — With Thanksgiving only a couple days away, here are some safety tips from the Knox County Health Department and the Knox County Fire Prevention Bureau, as well as information on proper food waste disposal from the Knox County Solid Waste Department:

Safe Cooking

- Clean and Separate:
 - Wash hands thoroughly for 20 seconds with soap and warm water before and after handling food, especially raw meat.
 - Wash vegetables thoroughly and sanitize food-contact surfaces after preparing each food item and before beginning the next item.
 - Use separate cutting boards for meats, seafood and other foods that will be cooked, as well as ready-to-eat foods such as raw fruits and vegetables.
 - Do not rinse raw meat or poultry before cooking; it can spread bacteria.
 - Do not put cooked meat back into a container that previously held raw meat.
- Cooking:
 - Use a food thermometer to ensure meat has reached a safe internal temperature.
 - To check a turkey for doneness, insert a food thermometer into multiple locations (thighs, wings, legs and breast) in the thickest portions.
 - The turkey is done when the temperature reads 165 degrees for 15 seconds in the thickest parts of the meat. If you choose to cook your stuffing inside the bird, the internal temperature of the stuffing also needs to be verified with a probe thermometer and have reached 165 degrees for 15 seconds to be served safely.
- Storage and Leftovers:
 - Use the two-hour rule: refrigerate leftovers within two hours of serving.
 - Your refrigerator should be set no higher than 40 degrees and the freezer at 0 degrees.
 - Hot casseroles and gravies can make your refrigerator struggle to keep the correct temperature. Let hot foods cool at room temperature or in an ice bath to 70 degrees or below before storing in the refrigerator.
 - Never defrost food at room temperature. A 20-pound frozen turkey needs two to three days in the refrigerator to thaw completely, so plan accordingly. Cold running water and the microwave may also be used to thaw food, but food defrosted in this manner should be cooked immediately.
- More food safety tips at <https://knoxcounty.org/health/kchn/kchn.php?id=410>

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Fire Safety

- Never leave any cooking appliance unattended, especially turkey fryers.
- Because they can catch fire, avoid wearing loose or baggy clothing when cooking. And remember: stop, drop and roll.
- Keep a large lid near the cooking area to cover and smother any stovetop cooking fires.
- Turkey fryers:
 - Read the manufacturer's instructions thoroughly before using the fryer.
 - Use proper oil quantity and thawing methods prior to cooking.
 - NEVER use your fryer inside your home, garage or on a balcony or patio.
 - Turkey fryers should be set up at least 20 feet away from your home or any combustible material. This also goes for gas and charcoal/wood burning grills.
 - If you are cooking using charcoal or wood, make sure you are disposing of the burnt charcoal in a metal trash can at least 10 feet from your home and that it is covered by a lid.
 - Do not place burnt coals in plastic or cardboard receptacles, and never keep them inside your home or garage.
 - Coals can smolder and retain heat for days, which could start a fire.
- Scented candles are popular during the holidays around the home and dinner table, and can sometimes be forgotten or inadvertently knocked over. Here are a couple candle safety tips to remember:
 - Never leave any open flame candle, or fireplace, unattended.
 - Consider using battery powered, flameless candles, which are realistic and safe.
- Remember to change your smoke detector batteries at least once a year. Pick a holiday or time of year, like Thanksgiving or daylight saving time, to replace the batteries. The entire smoke detector should be replaced every 10 years.
- More fire safety tips at <https://www.facebook.com/KCFPB>, <https://twitter.com/knoxTNfire> and <https://knoxcounty.org/fire/>.

Waste Disposal

- Never pour oil or grease down residential drains or any public storm drains. This can cause costly problems for your home's plumbing and municipal sewers.
- Recycle used vegetable oil for free at six Knox County Convenience Center locations:
 - *Dutchtown Convenience Center* – 10618 Dutchtown Rd.
 - *Halls Convenience Center* – 3608 Neal Dr.
 - *John Sevier Convenience Center* – 1950 W. Governor John Sevier Hwy
 - *Karns Convenience Center* – 6930 Karns Crossing Lane
 - *Powell Convenience Center* – 7311 Morton View Lane
 - *Tazewell Pike / Gibbs Convenience Center* – 7201 Tazewell Pike
 - Waste vegetable oil must be in a closed, non-glass container.
 - OIL NOT CURRENTLY ACCEPTED AT CARTER: The used oil shed is under construction at the Carter Convenience Center.
- To avoid rodents and other pests around your trash, consider taking Thanksgiving Day food waste to one of Knox County's seven Solid Waste Convenience Centers.
- Centers are closed Thanksgiving Day, but will be open regular hours Friday, Nov. 23 and Saturday, Nov. 24.
- More information, including hours and locations, at https://knoxcounty.org/solid_waste/.

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