

# Focus on Fire Safety: Holiday Cooking

Cooking fires continue to be the most common type of fires experienced by U.S. households. This is even more apparent during the holidays. **There is an increased incidence of cooking fires on Thanksgiving, Christmas Eve Day, and Christmas Day.** Cooking fires are also the leading cause of civilian fire injuries in residences. These fires are preventable by simply being more attentive to the use of cooking materials and equipment.

Don't become a cooking fire casualty. Learn the facts about cooking fire safety today!

## Safe Cooking Tips

The kitchen can be one of the most hazardous rooms in the home if you don't practice safe cooking behaviors. Here are some safety tips to help:

- Stay in the kitchen when you are frying, grilling, or broiling food. If you leave the kitchen for even a short period of time, turn off the stove.
- If you are simmering, baking, roasting, or boiling food, check it regularly, remain in the home while food is cooking, and use a timer to remind you that you're cooking.
- Stay alert! To prevent cooking fires, you have to be alert. You won't be if you are sleepy, have been drinking alcohol, or have taken medicine that makes you drowsy.
- Keep anything that can catch fire - potholders, oven mitts, wooden utensils, paper or plastic bags, food packaging, towels, or curtains - away from your stovetop.
- Keep the stovetop, burners, and oven clean.
- Wear short, close-fitting or tightly rolled sleeves when cooking. Loose clothing can dangle onto stove burners and catch fire if it comes into contact with a gas flame or electric burner.
- Plug microwave ovens and other cooking appliances directly into an outlet. Never use an extension cord for a cooking appliance, as it can overload the circuit and cause a fire.



When cooking, stay in the kitchen and keep an eye on the stove.

## If You Have a Cooking Fire

- When in doubt, just get out. When you leave, close the door behind you to help contain the fire. Call 9-1-1 or the local emergency number after you leave.
- If you do try to fight the fire, be sure others are already getting out and you have a clear path to the exit.
- Always keep an oven mitt and a lid nearby when you are cooking. If a small grease fire starts in a pan, smother the flames by carefully sliding the lid over the pan (make sure you are wearing the oven mitt). Turn off the burner. Do not move the pan. To keep the fire from restarting, leave the lid on until the pan is completely cool.
- In case of an oven fire, turn off the heat and keep the door closed to prevent flames from burning you or your clothing.
- If you have a fire in your microwave oven, turn it off immediately and keep the door closed. Never open the door until the fire is completely out. Unplug the appliance if you can safely reach the outlet.
- After a fire, both ovens and microwaves should be checked and/or serviced before being used again.

## Nuisance Smoke Alarms

If a smoke alarm sounds during normal cooking, you may need to move it farther away from the kitchen (according to manufacturer's instructions) and/or install a smoke alarm with a pause button.

If your alarm already has a pause button, push the pause button, open the door or window, and fan the area around the alarm with a towel to get the air moving. **Do not disable the smoke alarm or take the batteries out!**

Treat every smoke alarm activation as a likely fire and react quickly and safely to the alarm.

## Turkey Fryer Safety Tips

- Use turkey fryers outdoors a safe distance from buildings and any other combustible materials.
- Never use turkey fryers in a garage or on a wooden deck.
- Make sure 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 do not watch the fryer carefully, the oil will continue to heat until it catches fire.
- Never let children or pets near the fryer even if it is not in use. 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 do not mix; water causes oil to spill over causing a fire or even an explosion hazard.
- The National Turkey Federation recommends thawing the turkey in the refrigerator approximately 24 hours for every five pounds in weight.
- Keep an all-purpose fire extinguisher nearby. Never use water to extinguish a grease fire. If the fire is manageable, use your all-purpose fire extinguisher. If the fire increases, immediately call the fire department for help.

Source: [Underwriters Laboratories](#)



Young children are at high risk from non-fire cooking-related burns. Have a “kid-free zone” of at least 3 feet around the stove.

## Burns and Scalds

Most burns associated with cooking equipment, cookware, and tableware are not caused by fire or flame. In 2009, ranges or ovens were involved in an estimated 17,300 thermal burn injuries seen in U.S. hospital emergency rooms. (Source: NFPA) Microwaves are a leading cause of scald burns. Be extra careful when opening a heated food container. Heat food in containers that are marked ‘microwave safe.’ Since foods heat unevenly in the microwave, make sure you stir and test the food before eating.

## Protecting Children from Scalds and Burns

Children under five face a higher risk of non-fire burns associated with cooking than of being burned in a cooking fire. (Source: NFPA) You can help prevent these injuries by following a few basic tips:

- Keep children at least 3 feet away from where food and drink are being prepared or carried.
- Keep hot foods and liquids away from the table or counter edges.
- Use the stove’s back burners if you have young children in the home.
- Never hold a child while cooking, drinking, or carrying hot foods or liquids.