



Fireproof your holiday feasts

Food is a big part of holiday fun, but festivities can take your attention away from cooking and lead to fires. Cooking caused half of residential building fires in 2014, according to the U.S. Fire Administration.

More cooking fires occur on Thanksgiving than any other day of the year. In fact, the National Fire Protection Association reports that three times as many home fires occur on that holiday compared with the average day, with Christmas Day and Christmas Eve not far behind.

Before you bake, broil, grill, sear or fry, remember these tips for fireproof feasts:

- Avoid an overcooked meal, or worse, by having someone on cooking duty at all times. If you have to leave, turn off cooking equipment first.
- Plan television time, video chats, chores and other activities outside of meal preparation time to limit distractions.
- Everyone loves hanging out in the kitchen – which can lead to bumps, spills and other injuries, especially when kids are involved. To minimize accidents and divert traffic, put snacks, games and toys in another room.
- Grills should only be used outdoors.
- If you are sleepy or have consumed alcohol, step away from cooking and designate a “driver” to take the lead.
- Keep dishtowels, oven mitts, paper products and other flammable materials away from heat.
- Smother grease fires with a metal lid or baking soda. Never use water and make sure to turn off the heat first. If a fire starts in the oven, turn off the heat and keep the oven door closed.

Fire Safety: Beyond Cooking

Winter is peak season for home fires.

- Be careful not to overload electrical outlets with heaters. Stick to one heater per plug.
- Unplug holiday lights and decorations before leaving the house or going to bed.
- Make sure to use lights and extension cords in their proper location. Indoor and outdoor lights can be very different.
- Examine holiday light strands for wear and tear. Test strands for burned out bulbs and replace them before using.
- Don't connect more than three strands of lights together.
- Keep flammable objects, including decorations, at least three feet away from heaters and fireplaces.
- Always keep burning candles in sight and away from children, pets and holiday decorations. Consider switching to flameless candles.
- Test your smoke alarms and replace dead batteries. It's also a good time to check your CO2 monitors.