

Recycle Post-Thanksgiving Cooking Oil

Oils Reusable As Biofuel

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Thinking of making fried turkey this Thanksgiving? Millions of Americans do each year and some would argue it's the only way to go, but clean-up can be troublesome.

Luckily, there are many options for how to dispose of the remaining cooking oil.

Cooking oils can usually be used multiple times when used for deep-frying. Simply strain the left-over oil to remove any batter pieces or other debris, place the oil in a clean, sealable plastic container and use it again.

Small amounts of cooking oil can also be combined with organic materials for composting, or soaked into paper, shredded and discarded in the trash.

With 3 to 5 gallons of cooking oil, however, it isn't practical to simply toss it into the trash -- and forget about pouring it down the drain!

Cooking oil and grease poured down drains can build up in pipes causing backups at home, in municipal water systems, and wreak havoc on sewage treatment. Dumping into a storm drain is even worse, because all that grime will flow directly into lakes, rivers and oceans and pollute natural habitats.

Instead, large quantities of oil can be recycled and turned into other products -- including biodiesel fuel.

Earth911.com is a recycling center search engine that can help you find a place to take your leftover oil. Just type in what you need to recycle and enter your ZIP code, and it will give you listings in your area.

Some cities are preparing for the post-Thanksgiving oil disposal by offering special recycling programs as well. Residents in Sacramento County, Calif., need only place their used oil in clear gallon jugs for curbside pick-up after the holidays. Your home county may offer a similar pick-up option.

Many restaurants recycle their oils, and if there is no residential oil recycling available near you, you could ask to drop yours off to be included in a local eatery's scheduled waste oil pick-up.

There are many companies cropping up that are devoted to recycling waste cooking oils. The Rocky Mountain Sustainable Enterprises (RMSE), a Colorado company that provides waste cooking oil recycling, has partnered with several cities to raise awareness and divert used cooking oil from municipal water systems and landfills. Companies like Greycle in Tucson, Ariz., and Biodiesel Industries in Dallas, Texas, are working with an increasing number of municipalities to help residents recycle their used cooking oil.

Safety Tip: Remember that all cooking oil should be cooled completely before being transferred into a different container or transported anywhere. Scalds with hot oil are generally more severe than those from hot water because oil heats to higher temperatures than water. Also, oil is thicker and may remain on the skin for a longer period of time.

In the event of an oil burn, consider the following first aid tips:

1. Cool the burned area with cool running water for several minutes.
2. Look for blistering, charring, or skin coming off. These kinds of burns could lead to infections.
3. For mild burns with reddened skin, apply a topical burn ointment or spray.
4. Large or severe burns require medical attention.