



The Turkey Derrick

Ask any professional fire fighter - they'll tell you -- every Thanksgiving they answer a slew of emergency calls...

Maybe you've seen the videos of decks or houses going up in flames because of careless turkey frying?

Have you seen the stats on critical burns people have sustained because their fry pots overflowed?! It's pretty shocking to learn how careless folks can be, and I wanted to do my part to enlighten as many people as I could in the truly safe way to fry a turkey.

There are more "DO NOT"s than you can shake a turkey leg at when you describe how to do this correctly, so follow along with me here, and a perfect, golden crispy turkey shall be yours... and without the agony of golden, crispy fried hands, arms, feet or shins.

After some thinking, sketching, a few trips to the hardware store... the Turkey Derrick was invented as an ideal way to intelligently and safely fry a bird.

WARNING: Failure to follow these instructions could result in fire or explosion which could cause property damage, personal injury or death.

HARDWARE:

- 1 - sturdy, high-quality outdoor propane gas burner unit with accessories; burner base should be stable, 4-legged and welded, not bolted; double rings of gas jets, and an air flow adjuster
- 1 - heavy-duty outdoor cooker pot with lifter/spindle insert - 30 - 34 quart capacity, approx 15" tall or more
- 1 - 8-foot fiberglass ladder
- 15' of heavy duty cotton sash cord – NOT synthetic, it can't take the heat
- 2 - 2" pulleys, one with swivel top
- 1 - 3" Link-quick or carabiner
- 2 - 75 lb. test plastic cable ties
- 1 - 6" window shade cleat
- 2 - 1 x 1/4" bolts
- 2 - 1/4" nuts
- 1 - Thermometer with clip attachment - to measure oil temperature
- 1 - instant-read meat thermometer
- 1 - fire extinguisher
- 1 - tank Propane fuel - filled to shoulder of tank
- 4' fuel line
- 3' piece of aluminum foil
- 1 - heavy wooden coat hanger

SOFTWARE:

- 1 - 12 -14 pound turkey - thawed in refrigerator for 2 days; turkey **MUST** be completely thawed; for best results, brine turkey for 6 - 12 hours in advance of frying - see www.foodnetwork.com for brine recipe & instructions
- 3-4 gallons Peanut oil

LOCATION:

Large-vessel frying is serious business. It matters a lot **WHERE** you stage this operation - be sure you are at least 10 feet, yes, **FEET**, away from any structure like your house, your garden shed, your wooden fence, your deck, carport or garage.

Also essential - a level surface.... but **NOT** a wooden deck surface, or a paved or concrete driveway - these will show oil splatters, kids like to play there, etc. A patch of grass or dirt that is level and free of toys and other obstacles is ideal.

Plus, you will need to keep everyone at a safe distance from your base of operations, like 10 feet away. This is no place for kids to play around, and no time to start any holiday drinking. Until your bird is done and delivered to the table, no alcohol allowed. Period.

Your base of operations should include a chair (because you are NOT going to leave this site until your turkey is done and the fire is out), a table containing your heat-resistant gloves, a timer, a stick-type lighter, a meat thermometer, a beverage (remember, non-alcoholic), and your trusty fire extinguisher – the MOST important device.

CONSTRUCTION PHASE:

1. THOROUGHLY read, and then re-read the instructions which come with your burner unit. Assemble burner unit as instructed in the manual.
2. Referencing fig. 1, inset D - bolt cleat to right side of ladder with the 2 bolts and nuts; tighten securely
3. Tie one end of sash cord to top rung of left side of ladder with a bowline knot (Very Important knot to know; it cannot come untied) fig. 1, inset A
4. Secure a pulley to the top rung of right side of ladder with 2 cable ties -- fig. 1, inset B
5. Thread sash cord through pulley #1 and then pulley #2; feed out enough cord to allow pulley #1 to center over the middle point beneath the ladder, about 4' off the ground; secure cord to cleat, wrapping in a figure-8 fashion several times and tying off so it cannot slip - fig. 1, inset C
6. Attach the Link-quick or carabiner to pulley #1 - fig. 1, inset C
7. Wrap the gas supply line with aluminum foil to protect it in case of any overflow
8. Place burner unit under pulley #1, centered beneath ladder, with propane tank on ground as far from burner unit as possible

FRYING:

1. Insert lifter spindle through turkey cavity, legs up and wings/breast down. You may need to tie wings in to keep them from flopping out, getting caught on pot edge; use cotton butcher's twine.
2. In your kitchen sink, lower turkey & spindle down into empty pot, and fill with water, one gallon at a time, until bird is just covered; remove spindle & turkey, then mark or measure that water fill level from top edge of pot so you will know how much oil will be needed. Pour out water and dry pot thoroughly.
3. Out at your base of operations, clip carabiner to top of lifter spindle, suspending turkey above burner surface by 30" or so

4. Set empty pot on burner unit, attach thermometer to side of pot, and fill with peanut oil to measured level; thermometer tip must be immersed in the oil; DO NOT OVERFILL
5. Following the instruction manual carefully, light gas burner and adjust gas and air flow; do NOT put a lid on pot; have a seat and wait while your oil reaches 250°
6. When oil reaches 250°, untie cord from cleat and SLOWLY lower turkey into hot oil; don't hurry this. Quickly dropping the turkey in is dangerous, plus it lowers the oil temperature dramatically. not good. When base of lifter touches bottom of pot, raise it back up 1", and tie off cord on cleat securely
7. Raise burner heat so oil reaches 350°, then set timer for 30 minutes - and DO NOT LEAVE your base of operations
8. Closely monitor oil temperature - it will start to climb above 350° as moisture cooks out of turkey - reduce gas flow accordingly to keep at 350° - very important. Allowing temp to go higher could result in a dangerous inferno.
9. After 30 minutes, untie cord from cleat, raise turkey out of oil, tie off cord, and insert instant-read meat thermometer. Turkey will be ready to remove when internal temp is 151° - take a reading at the breast, thigh and leg to be sure all parts of bird have reached 151°
10. Upon reaching 151° - raise turkey well above pot and tie off cord at cleat securely; turn off gas supply and put lid on pot; set timer for 30 minutes and have a seat. DO NOT LEAVE your base of operations - you want to defend your bird from hungry animals (& neighbors?), and it is still cooking... carryover heat will raise the internal temperature to an ideal 161° - perfect golden doneness. Continue to keep everyone away from base camp even though the flames have been extinguished- oil is still very hot
11. After reaching 161°, lower turkey to rest upon pot lid and unclip carabiner from spindle; using a heavy coat hanger, hook through top of spindle and lift turkey away to kitchen full of awestruck family and friends who will shower you with applause
12. When oil has cooled to below 80° - remove lid and filter oil back into original containers - it may be used once more. To dispose of oil, take to local collection point for recycling as bio-diesel fuel.

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(Turkey Derrick Plans on next page)

ALTON BROWN'S TURKEY DERRICK

