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Is Your Holiday Meal Bay-Friendly?

San Francisco Bay Area, CA – Most people don't realize that the preparation of rich holiday meals, and cleanup afterwards, can lead to sewage spills during the rainy season. Cooking foods like turkey and gravy creates fat, oil and grease that get washed down the drain during the cleanup of dishes, pots, pans and fryers. Over time, cooking oil and grease solidify into thick layers and build up on the inside of sewer lines and drainpipes, causing clogs.

These clogs can cause sewage to back up into our backyards, driveways and neighborhood streets. When backups occur, untreated sewage can flow into storm drains and local creeks that feed into San Francisco Bay, harming the marine ecosystem and wildlife that depend on healthy water. Untreated sewage also poses a health hazard to swimmers, kitesurfers, and kayakers who use the Bay year-round and are put at risk of exposure to pathogens and industrial chemicals if they are out on the Bay after a sewage spill.

"It's critical that local governments invest in sewage infrastructure upgrades to address the Bay Area's sewage spill problem. But local residents can help protect the health of the Bay by keeping grease out of kitchen drains," says Deb Self, Executive Director of San Francisco Baykeeper. "Rather than rinsing greasy dishes and pans, you can use paper towels to wipe out the oil, and conserve water at the same time. This small change can help reduce the number of winter sewage spills."

San Francisco Baykeeper's Tips for a Bay-Friendly Holiday Meal

- Pour cooled fat, oil and grease into a can with a lid, or mix it with an absorbent material such as cat litter, and dispose of in the kitchen compost container or garbage.
- Wipe down greasy pots, pans and dishes with a paper towel. Dispose of the paper towel in your kitchen compost or in the garbage.
- Don't use hot water or the garbage disposal to wash grease down the drain. After the water cools in the pipes, the grease hardens and causes clogs further along in the sewer system.
- Drop off large amounts of cooking oil—such as the oil used to fry a turkey—at recycling locations throughout the Bay Area. See the following list of San Francisco and East Bay recycling centers or go to www.baykeeper.org.

In the East Bay

San Francisco Baykeeper and the East Bay Municipal Utility District (EBMUD) are working together to educate residents about preventing sewage backups caused by fats, oil and grease by recycling their cooking oil. Here is list of holiday cooking oil collection sites for East Bay residents:

- EBMUD Wastewater Treatment Plant
2020 Wake Avenue, Oakland
Go to the guard station for directions to the self-service receptacle. Open seven days a week for all EBMUD residential customers.
- West County Integrated Waste Management Authority
101 Pittsburg Avenue, Richmond
Open Thursdays and Fridays, and the first Saturday of the month, 9 am to 4 pm
- Central Contra Costa Household Hazardous Waste Facility
4797 Imhoff Place, Martinez
Open Monday – Saturday, 9 am to 4 pm

In San Francisco

Now residents in San Francisco can participate in San Francisco's Greasecycle Program, which turns used cooking oil into biofuel. For more information, visit: <http://www.sfgreasecycle.org/>. Here is a list of cooking oil collection sites for San Francisco residents:

- Whole Foods SOMA
399 4th Street (at Harrison Street), Phone: 415-618-0050
Open every day during store hours, 8am to 10pm
- Whole Foods Franklin
1765 California Street (at Franklin Street), Phone: 415-674-0500
Open every day during store hours, 8am to 10pm
- Haight Ashbury Neighborhood Council Recycling Center (HANC)
755 Frederick St. (at Arguello Blvd.), Phone: 415-753-2971
Monday to Saturday 9am to 4pm, Sunday 12pm (Noon) to 4pm
- Dogpatch Biofuels
765 Pennsylvania Ave. (between 22nd & 23rd St.), Phone: 415-643-3435
Tuesday to Friday 11am to 7pm, Saturday 11am to 4pm, closed on Sunday and Monday
- Household Drop-off Waste Center
Recycle Road between 401 and 501 Tunnel Avenue, Phone: 415-330-1400
Thursday, Friday and Saturday, from 8am to 4pm

Wondering how cooking oil recycling works with San Francisco's new compost rules? Large amounts of oil or grease should be recycled for biofuel whenever possible. Small amounts of grease and fat can go into your compost heap.

San Francisco Baykeeper is the Bay's pollution watchdog, using science and advocacy to enforce clean water laws and hold polluters accountable. For more information, visit us at www.baykeeper.org. ###