



Russian River Watershed Association

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RRWA Environmental Column – November 2012 Stop and Think - No Grease Down the Sink

For many people, the holidays are not complete with a delicious, home-cooked meal, and all that cooking can lead to lots of leftover grease. The Russian River Watershed Association (RRWA) would like to remind residents that fats, oils and grease can cause costly clogs and unsanitary sewer back ups.

We all know that Fats, Oils and Grease will clog your arteries, but not everyone realizes that they will do the same to the pipes in your home and your local sewer system. Many people believe that grease is ok to put down the sink as long as it's warm, but what happens when that warm grease cools? Eventually, grease poured down the sink (or into the garbage disposal) will cool and harden, which can lead to unpleasant odors and blockages in your pipes.

Grease can also build up in your pipes from food scraps, even if they are put down the garbage disposal. So how should you dispose of all that grease from your delicious Holiday meal?

1. For best results, pour excess grease into a container with a tight-fitting lid for storing. Use a scraper or spatula to remove all the grease from the pan. Freeze it, or allow it to harden on its own, and throw the hardened oil away on trash day.
2. Don't rinse greasy dishes! Before washing, use a paper towel to remove small amounts of grease or cooking oil, and then simply throw the paper towel in the trash.
3. Scrape food remnants into the trash or a compost pile, not the sink or garbage disposal.
4. To place large amounts of oil in the trash, use kitty litter to absorb the oil, and place it in a sealed bag for disposal in the garbage.

Caution: *Hot grease can cause burns. Allow grease to cool slightly before handling or disposing.*

If you're planning on frying your turkey this Thanksgiving, don't let that oil go to waste, it can be frozen and reused, or recycled. Several restaurants will take small quantities (less than 10 gallons) of strained vegetable oil for recycling into biodiesel. See the websites below, or your local phone books recycling section for a list of restaurants accepting oil for recycling. Each restaurant has its own requirements, so be sure to call in advance.

For more information on the recycling or proper disposal of fats, oils, and grease, along with lots more great information on how to keep your community clean, in Sonoma County contact the Eco-Desk at (707)565-DESK (3375) or go to www.recyclenow.org; and in Mendocino County call the Solid Waste Management Authority at 707-468-9704 or go to <http://www.mendorecycle.org>.

This article was authored by Mynda Songer of the City of Cotati on behalf of RRWA. RRWA (www.rrwatershed.org) is an association of local public agencies in the Russian River Watershed that have come together to coordinate regional programs for clean water, fisheries restoration, and watershed enhancement.