



Fried Turkey: A Culinary History

Food historians generally agree that fried turkeys trace their roots to Bayou (Louisiana/Texas) Creole cuisine, according to Food Timeline, a website devoted to food origins.

The Web cites no exact year, restaurant, or person connected to fried turkeys, but anecdotal accounts indicate the tradition started in the Louisiana back country in the 1920s and 1930s, with the annual hog butchering. As hog fat was being rendered into lard, boiled in large vats over open fires, a chicken, goose or turkey would often be tossed in, creating the first fried birds.

Other anecdotal evidence finds that fried turkeys were often cooked outdoors throughout the South for large events such as family reunions, charity dinners and church suppers in the early 20th century.

It wasn't until national television exposure in the mid-1990s by celebrity chefs (including Emeril and Martha Stewart) that fried turkey gained popularity outside of the South. The first newspaper recipe for fried turkey migrated from Louisiana/Texas to Missouri, Tennessee, Georgia (thanks to peanut oil), and Washington D.C. before moving out West to Los Angeles and Seattle in 2000.

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Within the last five years, conventional turkey fryers using propane gas and gallons of hot oil could be found in hardware stores and discount chains across the country, starting on Labor Day—just in time for Thanksgiving.

But instead of making news for its crispy deliciousness, fried turkey made headlines after causing major house and deck fires, severe burns and even deaths when the vats filled with hot oil spilled over.

In the fall, 2007, Char-Broil launched The Big Easy, the industry's first oil-less turkey fryer, using infrared heat to safely cook the turkey without fear of spills, fires or burns, and eliminating the hassles of disposing of used oil.

The Big Easy is available from Char-Broil retailers nationwide. Suggested retail price is \$149. For more information, please visit www.charbroil.com.

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