

Eco-Tip 11/26/17

Free Recycling Event for Grease and Used Cooking Oil

By David Goldstein, Ventura County PWA, IWMD

Some people who fried their turkey dinners last Thursday are wondering how to properly dispose of the liquid left over in their fryers. Even cooks with more traditional culinary practices sometimes need to get rid of fat, oil, and grease. Dumping grease down drains causes clogs.

On Saturday, December 2, the City of Moorpark and Coastal Byproducts will host a free recycling collection event for this type of waste, and residents from all of Ventura County are invited. The event will be open from 9 a.m. to noon at the Moorpark Public Services Facility, 627 Fitch Avenue. Residents may bring their own sealed containers with used cooking oil to the event at no charge. However, containers will not be returned to residents, and no loads from commercial sources will be allowed.

The event, now in its second year, was the result of Moorpark staff responding to residents asking the city about how to dispose of their grease. Last year, residents from all over Ventura County brought 250 gallons of used cooking oil and grease to the event.

Coastal Byproducts normally charges restaurants for clean out of grease traps and interceptors, but it also collects used cooking oil free from restaurants and other facilities with commercial kitchens. As they do with the waste from those collection routes, Coastal Byproducts will transport the waste from this event to their processing facility in Oxnard. From there, processed cooking oil, called "yellow grease," will be sold to biodiesel manufacturers. Coastal Byproducts will haul solids and water separated during processing to Hill Canyon Wastewater Treatment Plant, operated by the city of Thousand Oaks.

The Hill Canyon plant puts these materials into anaerobic digesters, which are large, enclosed containers where micro-organisms convert biosolids (from sewers) into the first stage of a compost-related product. While converting the waste, the micro-organisms release biogas, which is captured to create renewable energy powering the facility.

Normally, when events such as this collection day are not available, residents still have options for disposing cooking oil. Liquid waste is not allowed in curbside carts or for direct disposal in landfills, but making grease into a solid (for example, combining it with kitty litter or other dry garbage) and disposing small amounts of grease in regular curbside garbage carts is legal.

However, grease disposal wastes resources and may pose a detriment to the environment during collection or transport.

Alternatively, although cooking oil is not a hazardous waste, it is accepted at household hazardous waste collection events, where it is treated as a hazardous waste because it is combustible. The down side to this option is the expense. Dropping off at events is free for participants, but contractors prepare for dangerous items brought to these events, so they charge host jurisdictions. For example, public agencies pay private contractors and administrators \$56.00 to \$86.00 per vehicle to handle hazardous waste delivered to the County's Pollution Prevention Center between Ventura and Ojai. Of course, if you are planning to attend a household hazardous waste collection event anyway, and cooking oil is just one more item you are adding to a full car, the cost is negligible.

If you live far from Moorpark, the right environmental choice might be to not attend the event this Saturday. The environmental and economic cost of driving your cooking oil to a collection event might make it a less desirable option than disposing of the waste as a solid in your regular garbage or combining it with a full car load of household hazardous waste destined for collection events closer to your home. Also, some extremely committed recyclers dispose of cooking oil and grease in a neighborhood restaurant's outdoor collection drums, with permission from the restaurant owner.

On the net:

www.moorparkca.gov/CookingOil

www.coastalbyproducts.com