

Cooking oil—to reuse or not to reuse—that is the question! And this short article will tell you why your answer should be YES! To be fair, we will present both sides of the argument, but one side will be much shorter than the other.

So you just went out and paid big bucks for frying oil. (I just checked prices on the internet—Wal-Mart has 3 gallons of Louanne for \$36.48, and Academy sells 1 gallon of Cajun Injector brand for \$14.99!) Yikes! That's more expensive than gasoline! But, unlike gasoline, cooking oil can be reused if taken care of properly... more on that in a minute.

First, let's look at the two main reasons why NOT to reuse oil. They are very simple and straightforward. The first is health concerns, and the second is taste transfer.

It is true that as oil is reused, it breaks down chemically. If reused to the extreme, these changes can possibly lead to health concerns. Probably the foremost concern is the formation of a toxin referred to as HNE. You may want to look up more details about this on other websites, but what you will find (repeatedly) will be statements about how oil that has been overly used and taken to this breakdown point can POSSIBLY be linked to everything from liver failure to Alzheimer's.

Actually the wording they use is “possibly associated with increased risk ofetc.” In other words, they never come right out and say “reusing cooking oil will harm you—here's the proof.” That's because there isn't such proof; otherwise you can bet that cooking oil bottles would come with warnings all over them about this danger. Surprisingly, just the opposite is true. I have found several websites (and you can, too) from brand name manufacturers who give instructions on their home website about how to safely reuse their product! It is the same basic info I am about to share with you.

Ok, let's look at the second reason: taste transfer. This is a legitimate concern if you intend to fry fish the first time, then a turkey the next and then maybe some french fries. No doubt your fries may taste a little funky! Or maybe your turkey! But you may be surprised to know this is exactly what happens at many fast food restaurants and school cafeterias.

Ask a friend or associate who has ever worked at one of these places. To be fair, they usually fry the foods that have the least amount of taste, like fries, first and then use the same oil for the more seasoned or stronger tasting stuff, especially breaded items.

If you've ever been to one of those Mom and Pop restaurants where there is a lot of fried food on the menu and everything seems to taste the same (maybe like chicken), this is the reason why. For many of us who fry the same thing over and over again, like fish or turkeys, this will not be an issue.

Now let's look at two or three reasons why you SHOULD REUSE cooking oil. The first is money... remember, cooking oil is 4 times as expensive as gas! A frying turkey from your local Wally World costs about a dollar a pound, so about \$12 by the time you add tax for a recommended medium sized bird. The three gallons of oil will cost \$35 to \$40 by the time you get tax on it! This is why I like to fry at least two and preferably three birds at a time (one after the other, of course).

Second, consider the environmental footprint. Obviously, the more you can reuse the oil, the less you have to dispose of. And really a bigger issue may be the raw product (peanuts in the case of peanut oil) that has to be used to create that gallon of oil. There is a reason why peanut oil costs more than gasoline. Think of how many peanuts have to be processed to get a gallon of oil! Every time you reuse your oil, you save a few peanuts here and there, not to mention the energy used in the manufacturing process and plastic used in the containers that end up decaying in the landfill for centuries.