DIGITAL PROOF
This is a representation of how your content will appear when published online. Please note that every publisher's website is unique, so the exact appearance will vary from site to site.

Planning a holiday dinner? Don't let a clogged pipe ruin the night

(BPT) - The fall and winter holidays are known as the cooking holidays when friends and family gather to share a meal and celebrate the season. If you're planning to host this year, you know there's a long list of tasks that can make the day beautiful and memorable for guests. With so many responsibilities, the last thing you want to add to the day is dealing with a clogged pipe that grinds the festivities to a halt.

Fortunately, clogged pipes can be easy to avoid: The Responsible Flushing Alliance (RFA) wants to save you the time and frustration of an avoidable plumbing emergency by properly disposing of cleaning wipes along with fats, oils and grease (FOG). Isn't your holiday feast complete without an expensive emergency visit from the plumber?

Don't let FOG create a clog

Many a tasty holiday recipe also creates FOG as a byproduct. While they help enhance the taste of a dish, they can cause a backup in the pipes if poured down your kitchen sink.

As an experienced cook and host, you likely already know that FOG should never drain down the sink. However, your kitchen helpers — especially the youngest junior chefs — may not know about the havoc FOG can cause in your plumbing.

FOG can create a nasty film inside your pipes that builds up over time, preventing water from flowing cleanly through your pipes. Eventually, this can constrict flow and cause a clog, flooding your kitchen and possibly other parts of your home, too.

Make sure to set a meal prep huddle with enthusiastic holiday helpers before they join you in the kitchen about why FOG should never go down the drain and teach them how to properly dispose of leftover liquids in a FOG can. For younger helpers, you can make this into a fun activity! Before dinner, have them make their own FOG can and decorate it for the holidays. Need an activity sheet with instructions on how to make a fun FOG can? We've got you covered.

No “Do Not Flush” wipes in pipes

Whether you are cleaning up the kitchen after a meal or tidying up the bathroom, non-flushable wipes such as hard surface wet wipes and baby wipes can be an enormous holiday timesaver. They're made of long, durable polymer fibers (plastic) so they can do the hard work of cleaning up spills, leftover food and liquids, and bathroom surfaces. However, this same durability can cause clogs to develop if flushed down your toilet. Always look for the “Do Not Flush” symbol on wipes packaging for proper disposal instructions.

Remember, even if a wipe says it is compostable, biodegradable, all natural, or made from plant-based fibers, it does not necessarily mean it is

flushable. More than 90% of wipes sold are non-flushable, which makes it very important to always look for proper disposal instructions.

And even if you don't see a clog in your household pipes, FOG and non-flushable wipes can cause havoc in our sewers. When cleaning wipes and baby wipes are inappropriately flushed down the toilet and combine with FOG, they can create fatbergs. These giant, cement-like masses can clog entire wastewater systems. According to the National Association of Clean Water Agencies (NACWA), non-flushable wipes that are improperly disposed of cost an estimated $441 million a year in additional operating costs for collection systems and U.S. clean water utilities.

If your guests offer to help you with the post-dinner cleanup, remind them that wipes should always go into the trash and cannot be put down the kitchen sink or toilet. Have a large, visible trash can or bag in the kitchen, especially near cooking areas, so everyone knows exactly where wipes and other trash should land.

Celebrate without worry

Many hands make light work — and by educating yourself and others on how to avoid clogged pipes, you can celebrate the season and encourage new holiday helpers worry-free. To learn more about how you can flush smart during the holidays and year-round, visit FlushSmart.org.