

Celebrate an American Favorite

It's National Popcorn Poppin' Month



October is National Popcorn Poppin' Month, a time to honor America's favorite magical, munchable maize. You seldom need an excuse to grab a handful of these simple kernels of goodness, but a month long celebration gives you plenty of time and justification to try new recipes. Whether you make it sweet, savory or salty, plain or pumped up, you'll join your fellow Americans in consuming some 16 billion quarts this year.

October is chosen because it marks the triumphant end to the labor of the spring and summer months. As farmers head into the fields to gather the crops, families and friends gather to celebrate this beloved snack food.

Why do we love popcorn? How can we not? Popcorn is the fun food we eat when we're happy. It's the surprise food with "before" and "after" pictures that would make a Hollywood starlet cry for a makeover. It's the science experiment food kids are entertained and educated by as it miraculously changes from kernel to fluff in an instant, hard to soft, non-edible to edible. It's the simple pleasures food that reminds us to slow down. And it's the economical food costing mere pennies per serving.

Popcorn also is a whole grain, which makes it a good-for-you food. As a whole grain, popcorn provides carbohydrates and fiber to the diet and is naturally low in fat

and calories. That's good news for your waistline. It's an ideal in-between meals snack because it satisfies, but doesn't spoil your appetite.

Yet when all is said and done, popcorn is simply a great tasting food. Surprise your family and friends with a popcorn treat today in honor of National Popcorn Poppin' Month. For tasty recipes, fun facts, popcorn trivia and more, visit www.popcorn.org.

Maple Pumpkin Spice Popcorn

2 tablespoons brown sugar
2 tablespoons maple syrup
1 1/2 teaspoons pumpkin spice mix
1 tablespoon butter or margarine
1/2 cup chopped pecans, optional
5 cups popped popcorn

- In a large saucepan or pot, heat brown sugar, maple syrup and pumpkin pie spice mix over medium heat. Cook, stirring, 3 minutes or until sugar is dissolved and mixture is bubbling. Stir in butter until melted and well blended. Add pecans, if desired, and popcorn and stir until well coated.
- Allow mixture to cool before serving. Serve immediately or store in an airtight container.

Yield: 5 cups

Perfect Popcorn Popping Tips

Nothing's better than a great batch of popcorn. Here are a few tips for perfect popping, every time.

- Warm a heavy pan or skillet with lid. Add approximately 1/4 cup of vegetable oil to the pan, just enough to cover the bottom.
- Drop in two or three kernels and cover. When the kernels pop, add the remaining popcorn. Pour just enough kernels to cover the bottom of the pan. Again, cover with the lid.
- Shake the pan while the kernels heat and pop. Occasionally lift the lid slightly to allow steam to escape. When you hear the last few pops, remove the pan from the heat, take off the lid and empty the popped popcorn into a large bowl.

