



# Fiery Flavors Heat up the Home



Chilly temperatures call for chili spices. There's no quicker way to heat up your body than with the fiery sensation of hot peppers. These sometimes painful and highly addictive pods can cause sweat to form uncontrollably on the upper lip and brow, noses to run and eyes to water. But if you love chilies, you'll see this as part of the overall allure of this steamy southwest staple.

There are different types of chilies that range in heat level. Capsaicin is what gives chilies their bite and is most prominent in the seeds, inner membranes and around the stems. Chilies are rated on the amount of capsaicin they contain and measured on the Scoville Scale. Chili cook-off competitions—which often take place when the weather cools for good reason—include a less scientific “5 alarm chili” category. Firehouses often compete in these cook-offs and some even produce chili cookbooks, reinforcing the link between chilies and heat.

As the weather drops this season, warm yourself with these recipes from the Popcorn Board ([www.popcorn.org](http://www.popcorn.org)). Popcorn is a whole grain that provides

carbohydrates and fiber to the diet, is naturally low in fat and calories and costs just pennies per serving. You can adjust the seasoning to create a milder or spicier flavor. Chipotle Ranch Snack Mix calls for ground chipotle pepper, which lends a smoky, sweet meaty flavor with intense heat, although you can substitute with traditional chili powder.

### Chipotle Ranch Snack Mix

*Makes: 4 quarts, 16 servings (1 cup each)*

- 1 (1 ounce) package (2 tablespoons) ranch salad dressing mix
- 1/2 teaspoon ground chipotle chili pepper, or chili powder
- 1/4 teaspoon garlic salt
- 4 quarts popped popcorn
- Cooking spray
- Stir together ranch salad dressing mix, chipotle pepper and garlic salt in a small bowl.
- Lightly spray popcorn with cooking spray. Sprinkle 1 tablespoon of the seasoning mix over popcorn; toss and serve.
- Store remaining seasoning mix in an airtight container for future use.

Compliment your award winning chili recipe with this popcorn topping for added crunch and flavor. Makes a great snack by itself!

### Herbed Popcorn Chili and Soup Topper

*Makes: 4 cups*

- 4 cups air-popped popcorn
- Butter or original flavor cooking spray
- 1/4 teaspoon parsley flakes
- 1/4 teaspoon thyme
- 1/4 teaspoon dried basil
- 1/4 teaspoon dried oregano
- 1/4 teaspoon Cajun Creole seasoning or chili powder
- Place popcorn in a large, clean paper bag. Spray popcorn lightly with cooking spray, about 5 quick sprays. Sprinkle parsley, thyme, basil, oregano and Cajun Creole seasoning onto popcorn. Close bag and shake to distribute seasoning.
- Sprinkle on chili or soup at serving time.

