



**P**opcorn balls are an all time favorite American sweet. Although they might seem a bit old-fashioned and corny, at one time they were extremely fashionable. Baby Boomers will recall that popcorn balls were once a quintessential Halloween treat. The house that handed them out was always the hit of the neighborhood.

But much longer ago, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, popcorn balls were one of the most popular confections and often given as gifts. Their popularity spawned an industry of popcorn ball making gadgets. Victorian families often decorated fireplace mantels, doorways and Christmas trees with ornate ornaments made from popcorn balls. And by the turn of the century, most cookbooks featured at least one recipe.

The first published recipe for popcorn balls in 1861 was simple: "Boil honey, maple, or other sugar to the great thread; pop corn and stick the corn together in balls with the candy." Times have changed, but recipes for popcorn balls haven't. You still need a sugar source (sugar, maple syrup, corn syrup, molasses, marshmallows) heated to a thicker stage, mixed with popcorn, cooled enough to allow handling, then formed.

Try your hand at one of the following popcorn recipes this season. You'll have a ball making this sweet American treat.

#### Happy Halloween Mini Popcorn Balls

10 cups popped popcorn  
1 (1-lb.) pkg. miniature marshmallows  
1/4 cup (1/2 stick) butter or margarine  
1 cup diced dried fruit (papaya, mango or peaches)  
1 cup butterscotch chips  
Orange food coloring (optional)

- Mix popcorn, fruit and butterscotch chips in large bowl; set aside. In large saucepan, heat marshmallows and butter over low heat until melted and smooth. Stir in several drops of food coloring if desired. Pour over popcorn and candy, tossing to coat evenly. Cool to allow handling (5 min.). Butter hands well and form into 3-inch balls.\*

*Yield: About 16 balls*

#### Pop-a-rific Popcorn Balls

3 quarts popped popcorn  
1 (1-lb.) pkg. marshmallows  
1/4 cup (1/2 stick) butter or margarine

- Place popped popcorn in a large bowl. Set aside. In large saucepan, heat marshmallows and butter or margarine over low heat until melted and smooth. Pour over popcorn, tossing gently to mix well. Cool to allow handling (5 min.). Butter hands well and form 2 1/2-inch balls.\*

*Yield: About 14 balls*

#### Peanut Butter Popcorn Balls

1/2 cup sugar  
1/2 cup light corn syrup  
3 tablespoons butter or margarine  
3 tablespoons peanut butter  
8 cups popped popcorn  
1 cup candy-coated peanut candy

- Stir sugar, corn syrup, butter and peanut butter together in a large saucepan. Bring to a full boil over medium heat. Stir in popcorn until well coated. Remove pan from heat and stir candy pieces gently into mixture. Cool to allow handling (5 min.). Butter hands and form into 2-inch balls.\*

*Yield: About 18 balls*

#### Double Chocolate Popcorn Balls

1/2 cup sugar  
1/2 cup corn syrup  
1/4 cup butter or margarine  
2 tablespoons cocoa powder  
8 cups popped popcorn  
1 cup "M&M's"<sup>®</sup> Semi-Sweet Chocolate Mini Baking Bits

- Combine sugar, corn syrup, butter and cocoa in medium saucepan; bring to a boil. Add popcorn, stirring until evenly coated. Remove from heat. Stir in "M&M's"<sup>®</sup> pieces. Cool to allow handling (5 min.). Form into 2-inch balls.\*

*Yield: About 18 balls*

#### Cranberry Popcorn Balls

2 cups sugar  
1 10-ounce package (1 cup) frozen cranberry-orange relish  
1/2 cup cranberry juice  
1/2 cup light corn syrup  
1 teaspoon vinegar  
1/2 teaspoon salt  
5 quarts popped popcorn

- Combine all ingredients, except popcorn, in a heavy saucepan. Bring to a boil; lower heat and cook to 250° F on a candy thermometer (hard-ball stage). Mixture will bubble up in pan, so watch to keep from boiling over. Pour slowly onto hot popcorn and mix until well-coated. Cool to allow handling (5 min.). Butter hands well and form into 3-inch balls.\*

*Yield: About 18 balls*

\* Allow to cool, store in airtight container.

