

Popcorn Italiano!

Ah, *amore!* From the early days of Christopher Columbus to late evenings with Frank and Tony (to even later evenings with Pauly and Snooki), Americans have had an unwavering love affair with all things Italian—from sleek red sports cars to luxurious leather shoes; opera to artwork. And as enticing as Italian culture is, it is the food that has long captured our fancy. Who hasn't dined on piping hot spaghetti and meatballs, fragrant garlic bread, luscious layers of cheesy lasagna, or creamy cannoli?

And pizza! It is simply un-American not to like pizza, which has become as common as hot dogs, apple pie, and popcorn. So let's get to a little old-world style matchmaking. Popcorn meets Italian in the following delicious recipes courtesy of the Popcorn Board (www.popcorn.org). And, like any successful pairing, they prove to be a healthy relationship.

Popcorn is naturally low in fat and calories. It's a whole grain and contains complex carbohydrates and fiber. Consuming at least 3 or more ounce equivalents of whole grains per day can reduce the risk of several chronic diseases and may help with weight maintenance. Good news for your *amore* handles.

"Popcorn Con Pesto" is a fragrant combination of herbs, garlic, grated Parmesan cheese, pine nuts and fresh popcorn that's sure to please a crowd. If your hunger pangs call for an Italian fix *rapido*, try "That's Amore Easy Italian Snack."

Buon Appetito!

Popcorn Con Pesto

Yield: 5 quarts

Ingredients

5 quarts popped popcorn
1/2 cup melted butter
1 tablespoon dried basil leaves, crushed
1 teaspoon dried parsley, crushed
1 teaspoon garlic powder
1/3 cup Parmesan cheese
1/2 cup pine nuts (optional)

Directions

- Put popped popcorn in a large bowl and keep warm.
- In small saucepan, melt the butter; add basil, parsley, garlic, Parmesan cheese and nuts.
- Stir to blend.
- Pour over popped popcorn, stirring well.

Note: Dried thyme or oregano, or combination of ingredients, may be used in place of basil.

That's Amore Easy Italian Snack

Yield: 2 1/2 quarts

Ingredients

2 1/2 quarts popped popcorn
1/2 of a .7oz-package of Italian salad dressing mix

Directions

- Place popped popcorn in large bowl.
- Sprinkle zesty Italian salad dressing mix on top of the popcorn.
- Toss popcorn and seasoning to combine thoroughly.



Buon Appetito!