



SOUTH OF THE BORDER SNACKS



Mexican inspired food is a favorite in homes across the U.S. This vibrant and colorful culture has shaped culinary preferences in both large and small ways. We don't think twice of grabbing salsa from the grocer's aisle or mashing up an avocado or two. But we do spend time comparing and trying to find the perfect hot sauce. It seems as though everything was covered in Sriracha last year.

Our enmeshed physical and cultural roots include popcorn, a type of maize. Some of the oldest examples of maize were found in the Bat Caves of west central New Mexico and in the Tehuacan Valley of central Mexico. Pods at various sites were found to be some 4,000 to 7,000 years old.

In South America people valued their popcorn enough to be buried with it. Bags filled with popcorn were found in burial grounds of ancient people of the coastal deserts of North Chile. The kernels were so well preserved they still popped even though they were 1,000 years old. Talk about shelf life!

And sixteenth century Aztec Indians used popcorn as decoration for ceremonial headdresses, necklaces and ornamentation. Young women danced a "popcorn dance" and wore garlands of popcorn in their hair. Colonial Americans strung popcorn for Christmas décor.

For your next celebration, pop up a bowl of maize and create this culturally mashed up recipe for Mexican Popcorn, courtesy of the Popcorn Board (www.popcorn.org).



Mexican Popcorn

Ingredients:

- 2 quarts popped popcorn
- 2 tablespoons butter, melted
- ½ teaspoon hot pepper sauce (or to taste)
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1 teaspoon chili powder
- ½ teaspoon dried oregano
- ½ teaspoon garlic powder
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 2 tablespoons roasted and salted pepitas (pumpkin seeds)

Directions:

1. Place popcorn in a large bowl.
2. Mix butter and hot pepper sauce and toss with popcorn.
3. Mix remaining ingredients and sprinkle over popcorn.
4. Toss again and serve.