

POPCORN, FULLY



THE COOKFUL

Edited by Lyndsay Burginger and Christine Pittman

Popcorn, Fully

Why popcorn? It's a basic food and yet such a treat. It's healthy but you'd never know it because it's so insanely good. That's reason enough to take it on as a topic.

We also thought that, with Fall coming up, it'd be cool to do something on the campfire (yes, you can totally pop popcorn on the campfire!) and to dig into some Halloween-style popcorn balls.

Oh, and popcorn goes Pop! Is there any other food that transforms so much when it gets hot? That literally turns inside out? We couldn't resist. You're not going to believe how much stuff we have to say about it. We hope you learn a lot and that we inspire you to dive into a big bowl of popcorn soon.



THE COOKFUL

Popcorn, Fully

Table of Contents

The Ultimate Popcorn Buying Guide	4
What is Kettle Corn Anyway?	6
How To Cook Popcorn on the Stove	8
How to Pop Popcorn Over an Open Fire (Say What???)	11
DIY Microwave Popcorn is Better than the Store Bought Stuff	14
Microwave Caramel Corn	16
Bacon Sriracha Popcorn	18
Popcorn Dipped in Egg is the New Black	19
15 Ways to Pop Popcorn	20
Let's Go Retro! Classic Popcorn Balls	24
Marshmallow Popcorn Balls.	28
101 Popcorn Toppings.	30
Contributors	34
About The Cookful	36

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The Ultimate Popcorn Buying Guide

By Lyndsay Burginger

Addicted to Popcorn? We are too. Duh. And we fell madly in love with these 10 Popcorn items. We know you will too.

What makes popcorn so easy is its versatility of cooking methods. Have a microwave? Try a microwavable popper. A stove? How about a Whirley Pop? Heck, you can even pop popcorn on a campfire or grill.

So grab some melted butter and a sprinkle of salt because listed below are 11 products to feed your popcorn addiction.

1. If you want to make popcorn on the stove while looking like an organ grinder grab an old-fashioned [Whirley Pop](#). The more you turn the handle, the more the popcorn pops. Monkey not included.
2. Looking for something to pop popcorn fast? This [microwave popcorn popper](#) knows watt's up! Just add the oil and the kernels, put the lid on and slide it into the microwave. Pop!
3. Unleash your inner Brady Bunch and groove back to the 70's with this retro [electric popcorn popper](#). Just add the kernels and let the machine do the work while you sit back and fix your rabbit ears.
4. Bring the movie theater home without the outrageous sizes or prices of the concession stand. Pop some popcorn and serve them in little [paper party bags](#).

The Ultimate Popcorn Buying Guide

Continued from previous page

5. Camping? Make Popcorn on the grill with this [outdoor popcorn popper](#).
6. Add some zing with flavored [sea salts](#). From garlic roasted to tangy lime, sea salts are the bomb on popcorn.
7. Making Popcorn balls is a fun but oh-so-sticky project. Keep your hands clean with this [popcorn ball maker](#).
8. These small [popcorn bowls](#) are perfect for portioning out popcorn; plus once you finish your corn, a clever design is revealed!
9. Have you ever wanted to get drunk on popcorn? Now you can! This [battered popcorn flavored vodka](#) tastes just like the movie theater. Try it with a splash of cola and a sprinkling of freshly popped popcorn.
10. The most important thing you need to make great popcorn is: Popcorn! Try out different varieties with this [popcorn sampler pack](#).
11. Are you the type of person that searches through the jelly bean variety bags looking for the popcorn flavored beans? (Anyone? Anyone?). Well if it's you, we found the perfect solution: [individual bags filled with buttered popcorn flavored jelly beans](#). And nothing else!



What is Kettle Corn Anyhow?

By Lyndsay Burginger

Kettle corn is a treat from the Gods, or in history's case, the pioneers. Who knew?

One of the whiffs in the air at a carnival or fair is Kettle Corn. I've always been interested in learning the secrets behind this fun treat and, really, what makes it different than regular old popcorn. So I found out.

Kettle Corn was first introduced in the early 1700's when pioneers threw leftover corn kernels into large cast-iron kettles of lard. They would add a sweetener – honey or molasses, and then cook the mixture over an open fire. Once the corn was popped the pioneers would munch on handfuls of those sweet puffs.

What makes Kettle Corn unique is the added sugar which creates a crust around the popcorn. The popcorn is rapidly stirred, letting the sugar cook. The sugar mixes with the oil creating a syrup which glazes the popcorn and creates the crust.

What is Kettle Corn Anyhow?

Continued from previous page

Today Kettle Corn is made with a large kettle, a mixing paddle (it looks exactly like a boat oar. Actually, maybe they even use a boat oar. I didn't find out), and an extremely hot burner. Once the popcorn is popped, the kettle is flipped onto a slotted table. The kernels fall through the small holes, leaving the puffs on the table to cool.

To prevent oil burns, operators wear long gloves and protective eye gear. Who knew popcorn was such a dangerous business? But really, the popcorn jumps around sporadically and the operator is right there constantly watching to make sure the kernels don't burn. Most Kettle Corn operators like to use [Mushroom kernels](#), making that signature "Marie Antoinette hair piece" popcorn.

O.K., I just have to say that researching this did not curb my kettle corn craving. It just made it stronger! Look for me at a fair near you. I'll be the one chillin' at the kettle corn stand. Munch!

How To Cook Popcorn on the Stove

By Christine Pittman

Ciao, Microwave Popcorn Bags! (Ummm...ciao-goodbye, not ciao-hello). Once you get the hang of cooking popcorn on the stove, and once you taste the result, you'll never go back.

Call me a Popcorn snob, but I like popcorn popped on the stove top way better than the stuff coming from microwaveable bags. It's fluffier and slightly toasty. And I'll just say it, I feel weirdly proud of myself for being able to do something that most people don't know how to do. (See? Snob).

Making Popcorn on the stove is simple, cost-effective and doesn't have the chemicals that are used to line microwave bags. It also allows you to add your own flavors and use your oil of choice. Coconut and peanut oil have high smoke points and add great flavor. Grapeseed, canola and vegetable oil have the smoke point thing down but they don't add flavor (still good choices!).

I may be a snob but I'm happy to let you become one with me so I'm going to show you how easy it is to cook popcorn on the stove. You only need three ingredients and a saucepan. That's it, that's all.



How To Cook Popcorn on the Stove

Continued from previous page



Step 1: Start with a big heavy-duty saucepan. You want it to be 5 quarts. That's the typical size of a Dutch oven, if that's easier for you to imagine. You want it to have a nice thick solid bottom too. This is because you want it to heat slowly at first, then stay evenly hot and retain that heat a bit. We really like [this set of saucepans](#) and the largest in the set is perfect for popping corn.



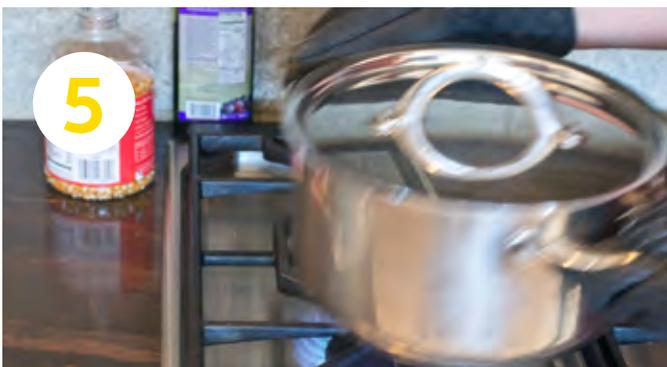
Step 2: Add 1/4 cup popcorn kernels to the pot.



Step 3: Add 1 tablespoon of oil. Use something with a high smoke point like coconut oil, peanut oil, grapeseed oil or vegetable oil.



Step 4: Put on the lid and turn the burner on high.



Step 5: Give the pot a good shake every 30 seconds or so. When you hear the first pop, take the pot off the heat and hold it an inch or two above the heat source. This is so that any popped kernels don't burn while the unpopped ones are finishing off.



Step 6: When the popping has slowed down (this doesn't take long to happen), turn off the heat and carefully take off the lid. You do need to be careful because it's steamy hot inside. And also, sometimes, one last kernel will decide to pop.

How To Cook Popcorn on the Stove

Continued from previous page



Step 7: Not really a step. Just showing you the popcorn. There it is.



Step 8: There was already oil used in the popping and so I find that you don't need to add melted butter. But need and want are different things. If you want it, add it. And sprinkle on some salt. Shake the pot again and then transfer the popcorn to a bowl.

How to Pop Popcorn Over an Open Fire (Say What???)

By Christine Pittman

Yes it's really a thing, popping popcorn on a campfire. It's easy to do. Impressive as heck. And the popcorn gets this smoky flavor from the, well, from the smoke. It's crazy.

If popping popcorn on the stove is cool, popping popcorn on a campfire is even cooler. It's really easy to do but there are three things you need to know first.

First, you need to get heavy duty aluminum foil. Not the flimsy stuff. Get the stuff that says "heavy duty" on the box. Really. I'm not kidding. The other kind will burn. Or rip. Something bad will happen. I know. It all happened to me.

Second, use a neutral-flavored oil like grapeseed or vegetable. It's because the smoke from the campfire is going to flavor your popcorn and you don't want any other flavors fighting it off.

Third, do not (and I repeat, DO NOT) skimp on the oil. It sounds like a lot. But it turns out it is very very important. How do I know? I skimped on the oil. I was like, "Two tablespoons? That's way too much. I'm not putting that much oil in there. No way. I'm just putting 1 teaspoon. Much healthier. Done." But not done. Nothing happened when I took the packets to the fire. Well, by nothing I mean no popping happened. There was a lot of waiting. And a lot of sweating (we did the photoshoot and soon-to-come video on an August afternoon in Florida. Dumb). And a lot of swearing ("Why the f*ck isn't it f*cking popping?"). And then some unintentional foil-packet-burning. And some stomping on burning foil packets. And then more swearing ("F*ck! F*ck! Ouch! Sh*t!"). But no "Poppety f*cking pop". Don't skimp. Just suck it up and embrace the full-fat experience of campfire popcorn. And thank me for the warning.

O.K., what you need to pop popcorn on the campfire:

- popcorn kernels,
- neutral-flavored oil (grapeseed or vegetable),
- salt,
- heavy-duty aluminum foil,
- a campfire stick ([like this](#), for roasting marshmallows and wieners and stuff),
- and a campfire.



How to Pop Popcorn Over an Open Fire

Continued from previous page



Step 1: Get an 18” piece of heavy duty aluminium foil. Put 2 tablespoons of popcorn kernels in the middle of one half of the foil. Drizzle with 2 tablespoons of oil (grapeseed or vegetable oil).



Step 2: Add a sprinkle of salt. Just a pinch or two.



Step 3: Fold the foil over the popcorn and oil.



Step 4: Crimp around the edges to make a packet. You want the crimp to go in by a couple of folds. But don't go right to the popcorn kernels. They need room to pop and there has to be space for the popped kernels or else they can tear the foil.



Step 5: At the top edge, make sure there's several layers of foil in a wide band crimped together. This is because you're going to poke your campfire fork through there and you want it to be nice and thick and sturdy so it doesn't rip.



Here's my finished packet. You can make a bunch of these ahead of time so that they're ready to take camping or to your backyard fire pit.

How to Pop Popcorn Over an Open Fire

Continued from previous page



Step 6: Poke the campfire fork through that thick band of foil you created at the top.



Step 7: Hold it over the flames of the campfire. Don't put it in the flames. You want it above. It's kind of the way I toast a marshmallow if I want it lightly browned evenly all over the outside (not the way I toast a marshmallow if I want it to catch on fire so I can hold my stick in the air and yell, "[By the power of Grayskull. I have the power!](#)" What? Doesn't everybody do that?)

Give it a shake every now and then. But not too much. You don't want the packet to fall off your stick (it sucks when that happens). After awhile you'll hear a pop. And then more pops. The popping won't last that long really because there aren't that many kernels in there. As soon as there's a pause in the popping, get it away from the heat.



Step 8: Open the packet carefully. It's steamy hot in there. You've done so well not having a swear-fest so far. No need to start now. Just eat and be happy.

DIY Microwave Popcorn is Better than the Store Bought Stuff

By Andrew Wilder

Just buy a stack of paper lunch bags (cheap!) and a tub of plain popcorn kernels (cheap! cheap!) and you're on your way to making your own microwave popcorn bags.

I'm going to let you in on a dirty little secret of the microwave popcorn industry: They're lying to us.

That's right, I said it. They're lying.

You see, you don't need to buy premixed, pre-salted or pre-flavored microwavable bags of popcorn. You can create even more flavor packed popcorn in your microwave with your own DIY Microwave Popcorn.

You can just take plain popcorn kernels, toss them in a paper bag, and pop them yourself in the microwave. Really. It works!

You get wonderful, fresh popcorn, just like out of a hot-air popper, in about two-three minutes. It's 0% extra effort, 95% less expensive, 99% less wasteful, and 100% better for your health!

Instead of dousing my popcorn with butter, I'll use an olive-oil mister to lightly coat it so my toppings will stick. My favorite topping is Nutritional Yeast. It has a wonderful nutty, cheesy flavor — and it's good for you, too!

So don't be fooled by the microwave popcorn in the store — you can make your own at home to save money, your health, and the environment. It's a win-win-win!



DIY Microwave Popcorn

Continued from previous page



Step 1: Measure 1/4 cup popcorn kernels.



Step 2: Put them into a regular paper lunch bag.



Step 3: Make a 3/4-inch fold at the top of the bag and then fold it over 5-7 times. It'll unroll a bit. No worries.



Step 4: Put the bag in the microwave. Set the microwave for 4 minutes. Let it pop until there is a pause in the popping. Note that when you microwave popcorn in a paper bag like this, there is more of a chance of burning the popcorn than with the store-bought version. Once you've done it a few times though and get to know your microwave, it'll be perfect every time.



Step 5: As the bag was microwaving, it unrolls some more. Again, no worries.



Step 6: Open the bag very slowly and carefully. It's super steamy and hot in there!

Microwave Caramel Corn

By Lyndsay Burginger

Sometimes we're kinda food snobs. But when a recipe works as well as this caramel corn, even if it's made in the microwave, we keep our noses out of the air.

My high school culinary arts instructor had a knack for finding easy cooking shortcuts – and this one was one of her best. This Microwave Caramel Corn only uses a microwave and a big grocery-store-style brown paper bag. If you have trouble getting your hands on these bags, do what I did: Next time you're grocery shopping, ask for your groceries to be bagged in paper. Now you have tons of paper bags to get popping with.

What I love most about this recipe is how simple it is. You pop your popcorn however you want. Or you can even use store-bought popped popcorn. We like this one. Amazingly, one 5.5 oz bag is exactly the right amount for the recipe. We tried it. It worked perfectly.

Then make the caramel topping and heat it in the microwave. Put the popcorn and the caramel in your big grocery bag and shake it. Back it goes into the microwave for a couple of minutes. Transfer it to a pan to cool and harden a bit and you're done.

Want to up that sweetness? Before cooling the popcorn, stir in 1 cup of chocolate chips and 1/2 cup roasted pecans. Did somebody say Turtles?

Recipe Inspired by Louise Markland, Bend High School Culinary Arts Instructor



Microwave Caramel Corn

Continued from previous page

Yield: 16 cups

Prep Time: 5 minutes

Cook Time: 7 minutes

Total Time: 12 minutes

Ingredients:

16 cups popped popcorn

1 cup brown sugar

1/2 cup butter, cut into 8 pieces

1/4 cup dark corn syrup

1/2 tsp. salt

1/2 tsp. baking soda

Special Equipment:

large brown paper bag

1. Place popped popcorn in large brown paper bag. In microwave-safe dish combine the brown sugar, butter, corn syrup and salt. Cook on high in the microwave for 2 minutes. Stir, then cook on high for 2 minutes more.
2. Stir in baking soda and when dissolved pour over popcorn in brown bag. Crumple up the top to seal. Shake well.
3. Place bag in microwave and cook on high for 1 minute 30 seconds. Take bag out, shake, and return to microwave for 1 minute. Take bag out, shake, and return to microwave for 30 seconds.
4. Carefully pour onto large pan to cool at room temperature or in refrigerator. Break up popcorn and serve.

Bacon Sriracha Popcorn

By Christine Pittman

Cliché alert: Today we're sticking bacon and Sriracha together and slapping it on popcorn. Oh yes we are!

Yes, we know that loving bacon and loving Sriracha are both total clichés in the world of food-lovers. We even thought of avoiding them all together. But no. How could we do our first full topic over here at The Cookful and not pull out everyone's favorite ingredients? We just couldn't do it.

You know what though, we at least stayed away from the bigger cliché: Sticking a fried egg on it. Or did we? Flip the page. You're not going to believe what we did!

A note about this recipe: What you're going to do to make this is mix together bacon fat and Sriracha in equal amounts. We at first tried tossing that mixture with the popcorn. But the liquid from the Sriracha made the popcorn deflate and get soggy. Not good.

Instead, we discovered that the best thing to do is to drizzle the mixture over the popcorn and let it be. As you reach in, some kernels have a heavy douse of the sauce (and those ones are a bit soggy) but others that go in your mouth at the same time have less or no sauce (so they're not soggy). The result is mostly fluffy popcorn with intense bacon and Sriracha flavor.



Yield: 8 cups

Prep Time: 10 minutes

Cook Time: 5 minutes

Total Time: 15 minutes

Ingredients:

8 cups popped popcorn
3 strips bacon
2 Tbsp. Sriracha

1. Put the popcorn in a serving bowl.
2. Put the bacon in skillet set over medium heat. Cook, flipping occasionally, until crispy, about 4-5 minutes. Transfer bacon to a cutting board. Measure 2 tablespoons of the bacon fat into a small bowl.
3. Add the Sriracha to the bacon fat and whisk to incorporate. Chop bacon finely. Drizzle Sriracha mixture over popcorn. Sprinkle with chopped bacon. Do not stir.

Popcorn Dipped in Egg is the New Black

By Christine Pittman

Seriously. You have GOT to try this. Pop some popcorn, fry some eggs and dip in.

This isn't a recipe. It's an idea. A simple idea. A delicious idea. A genius idea. If we do say so ourselves. We were munching on Sriracha Bacon Popcorn and obsessing about clichés when the idea came to us. Now we have to tell you about it.

Pop some popcorn (the campfire is the way to go here – smoky popcorn dipped in eggs for a camping breakfast? OMG, yes!) and fry up some eggs. Dip in.

Once you're in love with it (and we know you will be) pop some popcorn on a Sunday morning before you head out for brunch. Open up the bag at the table and let your friends give it a try. Popcorn dipped in egg is so going to be the new black!

Why it works: The yolk is thick and fatty enough that it doesn't make the popcorn soggy and yet the puckered pattern of the popcorn puff really grabs the yolk. As far as flavor goes, you know it's good; popcorn has that starchy carby feel to it and we all know that carbs and yolks are besties.

FYI, the streak of red on the eggs is Sriracha. It was great on there. But go with salsa or ketchup or keep your eggs plain. This popcorn-in-yolk thing is good no matter how you do it.



Yield: 1 serving

Prep Time: 5 minutes

Cook Time: 5 minutes

Total Time: 10 minutes

Ingredients:

2 eggs

2 cups of popped popcorn

1. Crack eggs into a skillet set over medium low heat. Cover and cook until whites are set but yolks are still runny. Transfer to a plate. Dip popcorn in egg yolk. Eat.



15 Ways to Pop Popcorn

By Angie Barrett

Eegads! Who knew there were so many ways to pop popcorn? Are there more? Did we miss any?

Popcorn is the perfect snack. It's tasty on its own but it can be topped with anything your creative imagination can dream up. And it can be ready in minutes. While I know that most of us grew up eating popcorn that was popped in that oh so familiar microwaveable bag, there are certainly more ways to pop those little kernels into light, fluffy popcorn.

While munching on a bag of buttered popcorn the other day I starting thinking about how many ways there could be to pop popcorn. I've been out searching for a few different ways and I've uncovered 15 Ways to pop Popcorn that you may or may not have thought of before. Let's get poppin'!

15 Ways to Pop Popcorn

Continued from previous page

1. MICROWAVE IN A PAPER BAG

This is probably pretty close to how you're used to popping popcorn, or at least this is the closest method that I grew up with. Except we're staying away from the store-bought bags of popcorn here. Using a brown paper bag, like on page 14, eliminates the chemicals and pre-mixed flavors you might find on the supermarket self.

2. MICROWAVE IN A BOWL

Another option for popping popcorn in the microwave is the easy and simple [Microwave-in-a-Bowl method](#). It's similar to the paper bag method but it doesn't require the paper bag. Just a microwave-safe bowl and a dinner plate.

3. STOVE-TOP

Want to venture away from the microwave and move on over to the stove? As we saw on page 8, all you need is a big saucepan with a lid and some oil with a high smoke point.

4. THE WHIRLEY POP

This is one of my favorite methods for popping popcorn at home. [The Whirley Pop](#) sits on top of the stove and requires just a touch of oil. It pops the kernels while you crank the handle. Josh from Two Peas and Their Pod makes [his favorite Kettle Corn Popcorn](#) with this method.

5. CAST-IRON POPPING

Since we're still over at the stove, let's dig on into an option that works as a multi-tasker. Need to season your cast iron pot (or skillet) and get the evening's movie popcorn made? Ozark Homesteader shows us [how to season cast iron by popping popcorn in it](#).

6. AIR POPPERS

Air poppers ([like this one](#)) use hot air and steam to pop those perfect little kernels into snackable popcorn. Air poppers have been around since the 70's and Elizabeth from [Guilty Kitchen](#) likes to show off her husband's perfected popcorn popping method with an air popper.

15 Ways to Pop Popcorn

Continued from previous page

7. ELECTRIC POPCORN MAKER

The [electric popcorn makers](#) are similar to the Whirley pop and the stove top methods but they use electricity and have an automatic stirrer placed in the bottom to keep the kernels moving.

8. ELECTRIC SKILLET

Don't want to turn the stove on? Break out [the electric skillet](#) to pop those kernels! I even found a video on how to make popcorn in the Electric Skillet. Kitchen Toys Make Cooking Fun shows you exactly [how to do it](#).

9. CAMPFIRE

Camping out and in need of a snack? It's so easy and fun to pop popcorn over the campfire. Just let the campfire do all of the work while you tell spooky ghost stories. The campfire popcorn on page 11 is perfect for when you're camping or for when you're out by the fire pit in the back yard. You won't believe the smoky flavor it takes on. Soooo good.

10. THE GRILL

During the summer months we love to spend time hanging out around the grill. We grill our main entrées and our desserts, so why not our snacks? Karen from Fit Bottomed Eats shows you [how it's done](#).

11. WOK POPCORN

I may be stretching here and this may not be that different from a big pot. But...Grace over at Leite's Culinary shows us that the perfect popcorn is [made in a Wok](#). All you need is a bit of oil, some popcorn kernels and [a large Wok with a lid](#).

15 Ways to Pop Popcorn

Continued from previous page

12. JIFFY POP

This is one of the methods that I grew up with, but didn't use a ton. [Jiffy Pop](#) was created in the 1950's as a way to pop popcorn on the stove (or campfire). You buy these ready to heat. You just place the pre-made pan of popcorn kernels and oil over a heat source like a stove top burner and as the kernels heat up they pop and expand the aluminum foil cover.

13. A HEAT GUN

I have no idea why anyone would want to do this but, thanks to [IgaNoKitsune on YouTube](#), there's a video that proves that it works!

14. POPPING POPCORN ON THE COB

I always thought that the kernels had to be removed from the cob before you popped them into popcorn. I was wrong! [MarvPerk3 shows us that an ear of corn can produce a fabulous snack.](#)

15. FRIED POPCORN

Last but not least, we have Fried Popcorn. Carrie from Bite Sized by Carrie [shows us how](#). This popcorn is packed with butter flavor but doesn't get soggy like other popcorn that has that butter poured all over it.

I had no idea that there were so many ways to pop popcorn! Did I miss any? I dare you to try to think of more!

Let's Go Retro! Classic Popcorn Balls

By Christine Pittman

Popcorn balls are a classic Halloween treat. They're also a great intro to candy-making for those of us who don't yet own a candy thermometer. (You'll have to go buy one like I did).

I remember popcorn balls as the Halloween treat that wasn't. We didn't eat them even though they were right there in our trick-or-treat bags. Did we not like them? Were they a disappointment up against the chocolate bars and licorice? Or did our mom not trust homemade treats from strangers? All of the above, I'm betting.

Whatever. Last year I made the version of popcorn balls that uses marshmallows - think rice crispy squares but made with popcorn and round. That recipe is next up in this book. My kids loved them and so did I. And so I thought that this year it was time to finally taste the classic.



I'll just say, they're kind of scary to make. I mean, if you've had loads of experience with making candy, like, if you already own a candy thermometer, you'll probably be fine. I've had limited experience. As I consulted several recipes I got a bit freaked. I tried several different versions though and it really wasn't very hard.

If you've never made candy before this is a good starter-recipe. It's pretty basic really and it's hard to screw it up. You do NEED a candy thermometer though. You're going to cook the sugar and water until it reaches the hard candy temperature of 255°F. You can't guess at that. It certainly took longer than I expected it to and without the thermometer I never would have left it there boiling so long. I bought [this candy thermometer](#) at my grocery store. It was with the can openers and cooking utensils. It's pretty basic but did the trick.

I don't think it's necessary that you learn all about candy-making to do this recipe. It's pretty straightforward really. But if you want to know more, [head over here](#). It's a short article but you'll find out about calibrating your thermometer, the candy-making stages and more.

How to Make Popcorn Balls

Continued from previous page



Step 1: Measure sugar, water, dark corn syrup, lemon juice and salt into a 5 quart heavy-bottomed sauce pan (we like the one in [this set](#)).



Step 2: Attach the [candy thermometer](#) to the pot. Make sure that the tip is in the liquid and not touching the bottom or side of the pot. Put a lid on the pot and put it over high heat.



Step 3: If you peek in the pot, it's totally boiling and going crazy like this. It's ok. It's supposed to do that.



Step 4: While it's coming up to temperature, put your popcorn on a big pan.



Step 5: When the thermometer reaches 255°F, turn off the heat. That's the hard candy stage that you're looking for. It's ok if the temp rises a bit after that. It can get up to 265°F and you're still good to go.



Step 6: Add vanilla. Stir.

How to Make Popcorn Balls

Continued from previous page



Step 7: Pour the candy mixture over the popcorn. I advise that you wear oven mitts just in case there's a spill and any part of your brain thinks it's a good idea to touch that stuff. It's hot. It will stick to you. It will not be fun.



Just keep pouring, working around the pan so that you're getting some in all the places. The syrup will be sinking to the bottom of the pan as you go. Don't worry. You'll get it spread out soon.



Step 8: Toss the popcorn around to coat it. Be careful because the syrup is still crazy hot. Do not do this with your hands. Again, unfun. Everything's a sticky mess. Oiling your utensils with vegetable oil helps a bit but not much.



Step 9: Definitely oil your hands. I used vegetable oil but any oil or softened butter will work. Keep a bowl of oil handy nearby. You're going to want to dip into it at least once or twice as you form the balls.



Step 10: When the syrup is cool enough to touch but still warm, form balls. Note, there will be pockets of hot syrup. This is unavoidable. Just be careful. Work quickly because it gets a bit harder to form the balls as the syrup cools. I chose to make 2-inch balls, which is a lot smaller than traditional popcorn balls. But I think these are easier for people to contemplate eating. In my first attempt I made big balls and really, I never wanted to finish a whole one. These are much more manageable.

Step 11: Put the popcorn balls on wax paper as they set. I got about 30 2-inch balls. If you do bigger 3-inch diameter balls, you'll get 12-14 of them. Popcorn balls will keep up to a week in a sealed container but are best the day they're made.

How to Make Popcorn Balls

Continued from previous page

Yield: 30 servings

Prep Time: 15 minutes

Cook Time: 20 minutes

Total Time: 35 minutes

Ingredients:

2 cups sugar

1 and 1/3 cups water

1/2 cup dark corn syrup

1 tsp. lemon juice

1/2 tsp. salt

1 tsp. vanilla extract

16 cups popped corn (make it or one 5.5 ounce bag like this works)

Note: Popcorn balls will keep up to a week in a sealed container but are best the day they're made.

1. Measure sugar, water, dark corn syrup, lemon juice and salt into a 5 quart heavy-bottomed sauce pan (we like the one in this set).
2. Attach the candy thermometer to the pot. Make sure that the tip is in the liquid and not touching the bottom or side of the pot. Put a lid on the pot and put it over high heat. It will come up to a boil and keep boiling like crazy. That's ok.
3. While it's coming up to temperature, put your popcorn on a big pan.
4. When the thermometer reaches 255°F, turn off the heat. That's the hard candy stage that you're looking for. It's ok if the temp rises a bit after that. It can get up to 265°F and you're still good to go.
5. Add vanilla. Stir. Pour the candy mixture over the popcorn. I advise that you wear oven mitts just in case there's a spill and any part of your brain thinks it's a good idea to touch that stuff. It's hot. It will stick to you. It will not be fun. Keep pouring, working around the pan so that you're getting some in all the places. The syrup will be sinking to the bottom of the pan as you go. Don't worry. You'll get it spread out soon.
6. Use a spatula or wooden spoon to toss the popcorn around to coat it. Be careful because the syrup is still crazy hot. Do not do this with your hands.
7. Oil your hands with vegetable oil or softened butter. Keep a bowl of oil handy nearby so you can dip into as you form the balls.
8. When the syrup is cool enough to touch but still warm, form balls. Note, there will be pockets of hot syrup. This is unavoidable. Just be careful. Work quickly because it gets a bit harder to form the balls as the syrup cools. Form 2-3 inch balls of popcorn and put them on wax paper to set.



Marshmallow Popcorn Balls

By Christine Pittman

Think rice krispy squares but made out of popcorn and round. The orange is just for extra Halloween fun. You can totally leave them white or go with another color. We'll leave the stylistic choices up to you.

Is it Halloween yet? The countdown begins now!

If the traditional popcorn balls were a bit too much for you (we know, candy-making can be overwhelming) these easy marshmallow popcorn balls are for you!

These guys are made in exactly the same way as rice krispy treats. Except you use popcorn instead of rice krispies. And they're round instead of square.

We've taken these popcorn balls to a whole new level of insane by making them orange and sticking a green candy on top. They totally look like pumpkins, right? But you can leave out the food coloring. Or go with a totally different color. We'll leave stylistic choices up to you.

Marshmallow Popcorn Balls

Continued from previous page

Quick tip: Put a lollipop stick in the pumpkin's bottom. There will be fewer sticky fingers during and after the treat-eating.

Yield: 16 servings

Total Time: 20 minutes

Ingredients:

4 green gummy candy fruit slices
4 Tbsp. butter
1 Tbsp. neon orange gel food coloring
10.5 oz. bag mini marshmallows
14 cups popped popcorn

1. Lightly oil a large baking sheet.
2. Cut each gummy candy into 4 curved strips.
3. In a large pot melt the butter over low heat. Whisk in the food coloring until evenly blended. Add the marshmallows and stir continuously until smooth and evenly orange. Add the popcorn and stir gently but thoroughly until all coated. Remove from heat.
4. Moisten hands with water and begin to shape popcorn into 2 and 1/2 inch balls. You'll get about 16 of them. Moisten your hands regularly to stop them from sticking to the mixture. (I keep the tap running gently throughout to make it easy to get them wet regularly). Place balls on the prepared baking sheet as you go. Immediately insert the green candy strips into the tops of the balls before they set. Let set for 30 minutes before serving. These are best eaten on the day they were made.



101 Popcorn Toppings

By Susannah Brinkley

Buttered Popcorn is so boring. Try out one of these 101 Creative Popcorn Toppings on your next movie night.

Every movie night deserves a bowl of popcorn. Why not dress it up with something different each time? We compiled a list of 101 popcorn toppings to make movie nights even tastier. Whether you prefer your popcorn sweet or savory or both, there is definitely a popcorn recipe here for you.

The very basics

1. [Simple Homemade Stovetop Popcorn with Salt](#)
2. Sprinkle with cheese powder.
3. Stir in a bit of truffle oil.
4. Toss with cinnamon sugar.
5. [Nutritional Yeast Popcorn](#)
6. Toss with olive oil and sea salt.
7. Add splash of balsamic vinegar.
8. Cover with melted butter.
9. [Salt and Vinegar Popcorn](#)
10. Douse it in melted white chocolate.

101 Popcorn Toppings

Continued from previous page

11. Drizzle on some melted dark chocolate.
12. Grind black pepper over top.
13. [5 Fun Make-Ahead Popcorn Toppings \(including Dorito-flavored!\)](#)

Butter it up

14. Brown your butter.
15. Dairy free? Try melted goat butter.
16. Sauté butter with minced garlic.
17. Douse popcorn with duck fat or bacon fat.

Throw in some herbs

18. [Brown Butter and Crispy Sage Popcorn](#)
19. Add a little rosemary.
20. Add dill weed and celery salt.
21. Shake on dried oregano.
22. [Matcha Herb Popcorn](#)

23. Sprinkled with chopped fresh parsley and a squeeze of lemon.
24. Stir in some basil pesto.
25. Throw in some fresh cilantro.

Put your spice rack to work

26. [Buffalo Popcorn](#)
27. Add garlic powder.
28. [Chili Cheese Popcorn](#)
29. Reach for the taco seasoning.
30. [Crab Shack Popcorn](#)
31. Toss with chili powder.
32. Toss with paprika.
33. [Fall Spiced Popcorn](#)
34. Toss with cayenne pepper.
35. [Cotija and Chile Spiced Popcorn](#)
36. [Mexican Chocolate Popcorn](#)
37. [Tabasco Honey Butter Popcorn](#)

A little fruit will keep the doctor away?

38. Drizzle with fresh lime juice.
39. Add citrus zest.
40. [White Chocolate Raspberry Cheesecake Popcorn](#)
41. Sprinkle in some raisins.
42. Or dried cranberries (Drizzle with melted chocolate and let it cool if you want popcorn and dried fruit clumps.)
43. [Orange Creamsicle Popcorn](#)

Eat it for dinner (we won't tell)

44. [Pizza Popcorn](#)
45. [Peanut Butter and Jelly Popcorn](#)
46. [BBQ Popcorn](#)
47. [Garlic Parmesan Popcorn](#)

101 Popcorn Toppings

Continued from previous page

Popcorn is for breakfast, right?

48. [Maple Bacon Bourbon Popcorn](#)
49. Stir in cocoa powder, brown sugar and chai spices.
50. [Sriracha Bacon Popcorn](#)
51. [Popcorn Dipped in Egg](#) (Yes, really. This is insane and a must must must try!)

Dessert popcorn

52. [Cake Mix and Sprinkles](#)
53. [Birthday Cake Oreo Popcorn](#)
54. [Toffee Butterscotch Popcorn Munch](#)
55. Pumpkin pie popcorn — add pumpkin pie spice and brown sugar!
56. [Cake Batter Popcorn](#)
57. [S'mores Popcorn Treats](#)
58. [Brown Butter Snickerdoodle Popcorn](#)
59. [Muddy Buddy Popcorn](#)
60. [Unicorn Popcorn Rocky Road](#)

Or try kettle corn!

61. [Skinny Churro Kettle Corn](#)
62. [Peanut Butter Kettle Corn](#)
63. [Pumpkin Spice Kettle Corn](#)
64. [Cinnamon Kettle Corn](#)

Always add chocolate

65. [Cookies and Cream Popcorn](#)
66. [Bacon and Chocolate Popcorn](#)
67. [Rocky Road Popcorn](#)
68. [Chocolate Chip Cookie Popcorn](#)
69. [Chocolate Peppermint Popcorn](#)

Ice cold

70. [Popcorn Ice Cream Caramel Sundaes](#)
71. [Frozen Popcorn](#)
72. [Caramel Corn Pistachio Ice Cream Sandwiches](#)

Sweet like candy

73. [Salted Butterscotch Popcorn](#)
74. [Vegan Almond Joy Popcorn](#)

75. Add M&Ms, raisins, nuts and cereal for a twist on trail mix.
76. [Peanut Butter Drizzled Popcorn](#)
77. [Snickers Popcorn](#)
78. [White Chocolate Pumpkin Protein Popcorn](#)
79. [Easy Microwave Caramel Corn](#)
80. [Loaded Candy Bar Popcorn](#)
81. [Red Hot Popcorn from Taste & Tell](#)

Top with caramel goodness

82. [Caramel Corn](#)
83. [Peanut Butter Caramel Popcorn](#)
84. [Vegan Caramel Corn with Cacao Nibs and Coconut](#)
85. [Caramel Masala Popcorn with Pistachios](#)
86. Make a [Basic Caramel Corn](#) and then sprinkle with sea salt for salted caramel popcorn.
87. [Sriracha Caramel Corn](#)

101 Popcorn Toppings

Continued from previous page

Sprinkle on popcorn as the topping

88. [Cinnamon Apple Coffee Cake with Caramel Corn Topping](#)
89. [Cookie Butter Popcorn Cupcakes](#)
90. [Matcha Popcorn Milkshake](#)
91. [Double Chocolate Peanut Butter Layer Cake with Caramel Popcorn](#)

Popcorn around the world

92. Canadian: Popcorn poutine? Sprinkle hot popcorn with shredded cheese then dip in beef gravy.
93. Creole/cajun: Add creole or cajun seasoning.
94. [Mexican: Churro Popcorn](#)
95. French: Toss with Herbes de Provence and butter.
96. Hawaiian: Toss with coconut flakes.
97. Indian: Sprinkle in some curry spices.
98. Italian: Sprinkle with grated parmesan cheese and Italian seasoning.
99. Japanese: Pour on the fiery wasabi powder.
100. Thai: Add a few dashes of sriracha.
101. American: Toss with a packet of ranch dressing powder and butter.

Contributors

Many thanks to our writers for this edition of *The Cookful*.



Lyndsay Burginger

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It's always entertaining when Lyndsay's in the kitchen. She's even been known to belt out Broadway show tunes while making dinner (a handy whisk as her microphone, of course). She currently writes for *Cook and a Good Book*, a personal blog focusing on recipes based on literature. Lyndsay is also on the editorial team at *The Cookful*.



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Christine is the Founder and Senior Editor of *The Cookful*. She also blogs at *COOKtheSTORY* where she specializes in easy healthy homemade recipes. Healthiness aside, she has been known to shred cheese onto a dinner plate, microwave it for 30 seconds, and then eat the messy goop with a spoon.



Angie Barrett

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Angie blogs at *Big Bear's Wife* where she cooks up her favorite recipes that are based on her southern roots and her traveling adventures. She thinks the best smell in the world is a fully stocked spice cabinet and rejoices in the fact that she turned her "meat and potatoes only" husband into a "steamed broccoli and asparagus lover".

Contributors

Many thanks to our writers for this edition of *The Cookful*.



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Susannah blogs at Feast + West where she specializes in cocktails and easy entertaining recipes. She can (and often does) eat a whole jar of olives in one sitting, sans cocktail. A graphic designer, Susannah also blogs about design for bloggers at Garnishing Co. She also designed this ebook.



Andrew Wilder

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Andrew Wilder blogs at Eating Rules, where he insists that healthy eating doesn't have to suck. Each year he leads the October Unprocessed challenge, trying to get as many people as possible to eat no processed food for the entire month. Thankfully he considers both wine and cheese to be unprocessed!

About The Cookful

Do you love to geek-out over food and cooking? Then The Cookful is where you need to be.

We cook and write about one topic at a time, diving in deep to help you cook (and eat!) better than ever. Each topic comes with How-To's, innovative recipes, and a bunch of interesting tidbits so that you can learn all about it. Some topics we've covered are Margaritas, Quick Soups and Eggs Benedict. Head over to [The Cookful](#) to find out what our next topic is and then get ready to go off the deep end with us.



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