



Ring in the New Year with a pop



When I think about New Year's Eve snacks, the first thing I think of are those ranch-flavored oyster crackers. They seem to be a tradition at our parties around here. Look up the recipe! So good and so addicting!

The next thing that “pops” into mind is one of America's favorite and most POPular snack foods—popcorn. (Sorry for all the puns. I'll try to pop ... I mean stop! I'll try to stop. I know they get a little corny. Corny ... popcorn ... get it? Hahaha! You just can't escape the popcorn puns! OK, I'm done. I'll try to do butter ... oh, I mean better. I'll try to do better!)

I'm Just Cookin'

Written by Darci Tomky

In all seriousness, Americans must know what they're doing when they consume 17.3 billion quarts of popcorn each year. According to an article previously published in the Enterprise, popcorn snacks can have many health benefits, that is, if you leave off the caramel, butter and chocolate.

Popcorn contains more antioxidants than fruits and vegetables, something that helps fight and protect against cancer, heart disease and other ailments.

Popcorn has a low water content, so it has a higher concentration of antioxidants called polyphenols than sweet corn or fruit.

Made entirely from unprocessed whole grain, a serving of popcorn can offer more than 70 percent of the recommended daily value of whole grain in a diet.

The best way to enjoy popcorn is to pop it with air and eat it plain, but since it's New Year's and you haven't made your resolutions yet, here are a couple tasty popcorn recipes you can indulge in at your festivities.

The caramel popcorn recipe came from my grandma, and I stole the Christmas popcorn recipe from a friend at a holiday party, who found it at easiepeasie.blogspot.com .



Oven Caramel Popcorn

5 quarts popped popcorn
2 cups brown sugar
1 cup butter
1/2 cup dark corn syrup
1 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon baking soda

Pour the popped popcorn into a large roasting pan. Combine sugar, butter, syrup and salt in a heavy saucepan and boil 5 minutes. Remove from heat and add the baking soda, stir. Pour syrup mixture over the popped corn and toss the mixture to coat popcorn. Bake at 250 degrees for 1 hour. Stir the mixture 4-5 times, every 10 minutes or so. Spread the baked caramel popcorn on waxed paper-covered cookie sheets and carefully break into serving pieces as it cools. Store in a tightly sealed container.

Christmas Popcorn

Popcorn
1/2-3/4 cup white chocolate chips
Dash of salt (optional)
Sprinkles

Measure a capful of popcorn kernels and pop in popcorn popper. Divide popcorn into two big bowls for easier stirring. Measure white chocolate chips in a glass measuring pitcher. Place pitcher in microwave and cook chocolate for 30 seconds. Remove, stir and place back in microwave for another 30 seconds. Remove and stir until chocolate is smooth. Pour melted chocolate on popcorn and stir until the chocolate has covered all of the popcorn. Spread popcorn on a cookie sheet and sprinkle with a dash of salt (optional). Finish with some Christmas sprinkles.

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