

The Popping Corn Book

ORVILLE REDENBACHER'S AUTHORIZED AND
COMPLETE POPCORN LOVER'S GUIDE

Dear Reader:

I wish I could meet each of you and answer your questions in person.

For one thing, I would like to thank you for your kind letters and enthusiasm about my Orville Redenbacher's Gourmet Popping Corn.

For another, I enjoy sharing the facts and lore I have learned about our favorite snack over the years.

So I have put together this little book about the history of popcorn and the development of my superior popping corn. I have put in my directions for popping corn correctly, and I hope that you will follow them. I have written out some recipes we enjoy at my house for you to try.

I have included information about myself because some of you have been nice enough to ask after me. I hope you enjoy this book. It was great fun putting it together and I am sure after reading it, you will understand why I love popcorn as I do.

Orville Redenbacher



Popcorn & Other Corns

The first thing you have to understand is that popping corn is a special breed of corn. In fact, botanists divide corn into five different types.

1. **POD CORN** is something you only see in dried flower arrangements, and is prettier than it is useful. Each kernel on the ear is covered by a separate husk, instead of one husk sheathing the whole ear.
2. **FLINT CORN** or Indian Corn is not used for food these days, either. It is the handsome, multi-colored corn you see as decoration on doors and tables at Thanksgiving.
3. **DENT CORN** is generally raised for livestock feed. Today it is usually a hybrid, grows larger than other corn, and is the commonest kind. Its combination of hard and soft starches makes it dry unevenly, and that results in the dent on the crown of the kernel.
4. **SWEET CORN** is special because the kernels are soft, milky and sweet-tasting. Very little of its sugars turn to tougher starch, unless you pick them much too late or wait too long between picking and cooking.
5. **POPCORN**, properly known as "popping corn" is the only corn that explodes to many times its original volume when you heat it. Popping corn has practically all hard starch, but, inside each kernel there can be kept a tiny measure of moisture. In your popper when the temperature is just right, this droplet of moisture turns to steam, builds up pressure, and finally explodes.

Popping corn is small, compared to the other types, in stalk, ear and kernel.



THE EARLIEST AMERICAN FOOD



Unknown to the rest of the world, American Indians cultivated some species of native American grass, from which corn was developed . . . over 80,000 years ago. Archeologists have unearthed corn pollen that old in Mexico. And university botanists have been breeding corn backward to discover just how it all began. They have already worked back to corn with ancestral grass-like characteristics with just two rows of kernels on top.

Ears of popcorn 5,600 years old have turned up in caves in New Mexico, and there's good reason to believe popcorn was the first type of corn raised for hu-

man consumption. It was popular from Peru to Massachusetts and from the Southwest to the West Indies. Wherever the early European explorers found Indians who farmed, they noticed popcorn was an important food. Cortez and Columbus also found Indians making ceremonial decorations with popcorn, which is fun to remember when you string some for your Christmas tree.

Popped corn was served at the first American Thanksgiving. Quadequina, the brother of the Wampanoag chieftain, Massasoit, brought a big deerskin bag of it as his "hostess present." Through

Colonial times, Indians often brought along popped corn to peace negotiations with the settlers as a token of goodwill. Like you, they probably noticed it is hard to be grouchy while eating popped corn.

While popcorn grew in popularity, and most folks raised a patch of it in their gardens, it became a cash crop only with the great development of the Midwestern corn belt in the nineteenth century.

In the 1920's two things happened that really turned popcorn into a business. Research began to improve the breed through hybridization. And somebody discovered that popcorn and movies are a

great combination of pleasures. Today popcorn is sold in 99 per cent of all movie theaters. (I understand some big city theaters that show only foreign movies figure their audiences are too snooty to munch popcorn in public.)

Popcorn became popular in Europe only recently. The American GI deserves the credit. I have often watched the sound and scent of a popcorn-wagon draw crowds of young and old enthusiasts in Europe's parks and boulevards.

But Americans eat 383 million pounds of popped corn a year, and the rest of the world will have to munch fast to catch up.





POPCORN FACTS

Minneapolis/St. Paul is the popcorn eating capital of the world — four pounds of popcorn per person each year. The national average is two pounds a year for every man, woman and child.

Popcorn is a family snack food. About 60 per cent of the U.S. popcorn crop is eaten at home, and about 85 per cent of that is popped at home. The sound and sight and smell of corn popping appeals to young and old, it seems. And while a few individuals are cantankerous enough to dislike popcorn, I have never met a family that doesn't enjoy it.

Popcorn eaten out at movies, ball-parks, zoos, the circus and all sorts of sporting events accounts for 30 per cent of the total crop. The other 10 per cent is labelled miscellaneous — export, cushioning fragile products during shipment, (a terrible waste, if you ask me), decoration and so on.

POPCORN'S NOT ONLY FUN

The U.S. Department of Agriculture says popcorn is 77 per cent carbohydrate, 12 per cent protein, 5 per cent fat, and 2 per cent minerals, plus some water and roughage.

According to a guide on snacks published by The American Dental Association in 1975, popcorn is considered an acceptable food for nibbling because it does not contain sugar, like many snack foods.

Here is a tip for people watching their weight. Don't use butter; it's the butter that makes popcorn fattening. And when you use a top quality, flavorful corn like mine, it is delicious without butter. I always take my popcorn plain, with a touch of popcorn salt.

Compared to many another snack food, popcorn is economical. It takes just a half cup of my Gourmet Popping Corn to fill a four-quart popper. That means, including the oil and salt, you can make enough popcorn to satisfy the whole family for about 30 cents.





WHITE CORN OR YELLOW CORN?

Ten per cent of the popping corn grown in this country is the white variety. These sharp, pointy kernels generally pop up white and fluffy, but the majority of us popcorn lovers prefer the yellow corn because of its flavor.

Yellow corn comes in large, medium or small kernel varieties. My Gourmet Popping Corn is a small variety because I find it gives the best taste, and the best popping volume.

A little naturally colored popping corn is grown (red, brown, blue, and black), and you'll sometimes see corn that has been dyed with food coloring. It all pops out white. Only the husk is colored.

WHERE DOES POPCORN GROW?

Practically all of this nation's popcorn is grown in the great corn belt that stretches West from Ohio to Nebraska and Kansas. Iowa, Nebraska and Indiana grow the most. I may be prejudiced, but I prefer Indiana.

Popcorn is also grown in South Africa, Hungary, Greece, Yugoslavia, France, Spain, Italy, Israel, Argentina and Australia. But they get most all their hybrid popcorn seed from the U.S. At one time I sold popcorn seed to a lot of these countries, so I got to travel and see how they were doing with it. For example, the Government Agricultural Co-operative of Israel complained to me in 1972 that their corn wouldn't pop. We quickly found that in their climate the popcorn got too dry before harvesting. So we upped the harvest date by 10 days, and they have popped happily ever since.



My Gourmet Popping Corn

Well over 35 years ago, I set out to develop a popcorn seed that would produce the most outstanding bowl of popcorn you ever munched.

It took decades of experiments, cross-pollinating and plain, hard work to get the hybrid just right. Now, we have a team including Carl Hartman from Iowa State, our plant breeder, who joined us in 1959, and we still try about 9,000 cross pollinizations and inbreeds a year in our Valparaiso, Indiana nursery, and in our Homestead, Florida nursery. If there's a better popcorn possible, we'll find it.

In the nursery, the "mother" plant/ear shoots are covered with a sack to prevent the silk from being fertilized by any roving corn pollen which happens to be in the air. The "father" plants' tassels are secured in paper bags so we can collect their precious pollen and pour it carefully over the female silks. Each strand of silk when fertilized with one grain of pollen will produce one kernel of popcorn seed.

All this is done carefully by hand. Each seed ear remains covered for another 30 days while it matures, and then loses moisture for another three weeks before harvesting and testing. With similar care, we raise my special seed corn in nearby fields. Students from the local high schools give us a hand with detasseling, and learn some botany at the same time.

The following spring, this special seed is planted by farmers I have chosen because their fields are high in fertility, just right for my popping corn, and because they are willing to take the special pains in growing and harvesting that I demand.

Even so, like all farmers, we have to depend on Nature to cooperate for the next six months if we are to have a good, healthy crop. We need rain, but not too much. Warm sun, just enough of it. Mild breezes, not gales that could flatten the stalks. And slow cooling as Autumn sets in, because an early frost can make the corn unpopable and quite husky.



HARVEST AND HOME

About mid-October, the moisture content of the popcorn kernels concentrates down to about nineteen per cent. That's the point when the harvest begins, because the proper moisture content is vital to corn that will pop to your satisfaction.

Modern corn-harvesting combine machinery would bruise some of my kernels. Bruised kernels will not pop with quality, so I use only special harvesting equipment that harvests the corn on the ear. This is more expensive, but it ensures top quality.

Next the shucked ears are held in bins where I can keep an eye on them while the moisture level is slowly reduced to

about 15 per cent. Then we shell the kernels off the cob the old fashioned way with a corn sheller that rubs the ears together. (Ordinary shelling equipment has rough metal burrs that could bruise the kernels and I have told you how I feel about that. So we make sure our shellers have the rough edges removed before we start shelling.)

Now we slowly condition the corn, drying it just enough so the moisture level in each kernel is at the exact point where it will pop its maximum. All of this may seem very exacting, but as someone once said, "Trifles make perfection, but perfection is no trifle."



We're also particularly fussy about sorting and cleaning our corn. First we sift out all the kernels that are a little too big or a little too small. Then a gravity separator rejects any kernels that are too dry and light, and any bits of cob that sneaked past. The acceptable kernels go into the polisher which rubs away any dust, along with the little "bees wings" that attached the kernel to the cob. A stream of clean air leaves the shining polished kernels ready to package.

It would be no use my taking these troubles to make you perfect popping corn, if the package was not going to keep it in perfect popping condition until you use it. So I rejected the idea of bags or boxes. They let the moisture escape. And once you open a tin can, the rest of the corn could dry out and be less pop-

pable than the first batch. This is why my Gourmet Popping Corn is sold only in jars with air-tight, screw-on lids. We put it up in two sizes, 15 ounces and 30 ounces. If you put the lid on tight after each use, the last batch in the jar will pop up as well as the first.

To make absolutely certain nothing has gone awry, we check random samples of the corn, many times each day, as it is packed. I want to be positive that virtually every kernel you get will be in prime popping condition. That it will pop up big, crisp and tasty.

That is what you get when you buy a jar of Gourmet Popping Corn with my name on it.



NOW IT IS UP TO YOU

I've explained all that we do to make my Gourmet Popping Corn a truly superior corn. I would hate to see you ruin it by popping it badly. So here are my rules for getting the biggest bowl of the best-tasting popped corn every single time.

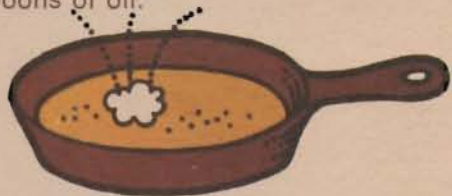


1. The popper. Many folks today use electric poppers which do save work and worry. But if you'd rather use a pot, pan, skillet, dutch oven or automatic fry pan, go right ahead. Just be sure the bottom is heavy, the lid vents off the steam, and the heat is set at medium. If you pop corn in a wire basket over an open fire, hold it far enough above the coals or flame so the corn won't scorch!



2. Measure, or man your brooms! Measure out one part of vegetable oil to three parts of popping corn. I prefer Wesson Oil. (Never use butter. It will burn.) It is

truly important to measure my Gourmet Popping Corn, because it pops up to 40 times or more its unpopped volume. (The usual popcorns pop up about 30 times, so you can see how my care pays off at popping time.) This means that $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of my corn and 3 tablespoons of oil will make a full four-quart popperful. If you put in too much, it may lift the lid and start popping all over the room. For 3 quarts use $\frac{1}{3}$ cup of corn and 2 tablespoons of oil.



3. Testing. First, put the oil and one kernel into the popping utensil, and heat. When the kernel pops, you'll know that the oil is heated properly. Now add the rest of the corn and cover.

4. Let off steam. If you're using a skillet or pan to pop in, be sure the lid allows steam to escape during popping.

As the moisture explodes the corn, it releases steam and if the steam can't escape, it will make the popped corn tough and soggy.

5. Shake. If you aren't using an electric popper, shake the pan to make sure every kernel is heated equally so that none burn or scoot off to the side.





6. Salt after popping. Never put the salt in the popper with the corn, because that tends to make the popped corn tough. I strongly recommend using fine-grained popcorn salt rather than regular table salt. It clings better and won't all land in the bottom of the bowl. Many stores have it, either on the salt or the popcorn shelf.



7. Butter? I think my Gourmet Popping Corn is so good that all you need to add is salt. If you'd like the flavor of butter without its high calories, try popping with Wesson buttery-flavored vegetable oil instead of adding butter to the popped corn. If you simply love butter and your conscience allows...melt, pour and toss with the popped corn in a big bowl.

8. Be kind to "shy fellows." If both you and I have done our jobs right, there shouldn't be a scatter of unpoppable "old maids" in the bottom of a batch of my Gourmet Popping Corn. But sometimes a kernel or two gets crowded away from the heat and doesn't have a chance to pop. If you find one, put it back in the jar to pop with your next batch.



9. Put the lid back on. I have mentioned that my corn comes in screw-top jars to keep it fresh between poppings. Do your part by putting the lid back on nice and tight. And don't refrigerate. Gourmet Popping Corn pops larger and fluffier if it is stored at room temperature.



GILDING THE LILY

To my mind a bowl of freshly-popped corn, warm and fragrant, is hard to improve upon. But over the years we have experimented with some recipes. Here are some plain and fancy favorites. We hope you'll find them tasty.

Each one starts with you popping a batch of my Gourmet Popping Corn, needless to say:



- 4 qts. popped Orville Redenbacher's Gourmet Popping Corn
- 1/3 cup butter or margarine, melted
- 1/2 teasp. each, garlic and onion salt
- 2 cups shredded sharp Cheddar cheese

CHEDDAR TOSS 'N HEAT

This is great as a snack. My wife, Nina, and I enjoy it with cocktails, sweet cider or a glass of cold milk. When the grandchildren come to visit, we often serve it for lunch with the family's favorite cream of tomato soup. It "fixes" while the soup heats.

Empty popped corn into an oven-proof mixing bowl. Add margarine, salts and cheese (a small amount at a time) and toss. Place in 325° oven 5 to 10 minutes to melt cheese; stir gently once or twice. Makes 4 quarts.





POPCORN PARTY MIX

Here's a popcorn mix to serve on almost any occasion. We always keep a batch on hand (it stores well in a tightly-covered container) to serve guests who drop by our Valparaiso home. It adds a party touch to any gathering.

- ¼ cup butter or margarine**
- ½ tsp. garlic salt**
- ½ tsp. onion salt**
- ¼ tsp. celery salt**
- 1½ Tablesp. Worcestershire**
- ⅛ tsp. Tabasco**
- 2 qts. popped Orville Redenbacher's
Gourmet Popping Corn**
- 1 cup pretzel sticks**
- 1½ cups salted mixed nuts**

Melt butter in small saucepan. Add seasonings; mix thoroughly. Spread popped Gourmet Popping Corn, pretzel sticks and nuts in large shallow baking pan. Pour seasoned butter over all; toss to mix. Bake at 275° 1 hour. Stir 4 or 5 times. Store in tightly covered container. Makes 2 quarts.



SISTER MABEL'S CARAMEL CORN

Everyone loves crispy caramel corn and the homemade variety is especially tasty. My sister, Mabel, developed her own family recipe for caramel corn. It's the best I've ever tasted. She often gives it as a hostess gift, packed in canisters she makes from empty food containers with their tight-fitting lids. It's one reason we just love to have Mabel come visit us!



2 cups light brown sugar, firmly packed
½ cup light corn syrup
½ lb. margarine or butter
¼ tsp. cream of tartar
1 tsp. salt
1 tsp. baking soda
**6 qts. popped Orville Redenbacher's
Gourmet Popping Corn (two batches)**

In 2½ quart saucepan, combine brown sugar, corn syrup, butter, cream of tartar and salt. Bring to boil, stirring, over medium high heat. Stirring constantly, boil rapidly to hard ball stage, 260° (about 5 minutes). Remove from heat. Stir in baking soda quickly but thoroughly; pour at once over popcorn in large roasting or baking pan. Stir gently until all kernels are coated. Bake at 200° 1 hour, stirring 2 or 3 times during baking. Turn out at once on wax paper; spread apart and allow to cool completely. Break apart; store in tightly covered container. Makes 6 quarts.



PEANUT BUTTER NOUGAT BARS

When any of our 16 grandchildren come to visit, there are always special treats. This one is a special family favorite, especially with the youngsters. My daughters tell me it's a great after-school snack.



- 1 (6-oz.) pkg. butterscotch pieces
- 1/3 cup peanut butter
- 2 Tablesp. butter or margarine
- 3 cups miniature marshmallows
- 1/4 teasp. salt
- 2½ qts. popped Orville Redenbacher's Gourmet Popping Corn
- 1 cup granola
- 1 (6-oz.) pkg. semi-sweet chocolate pieces

Melt butterscotch pieces, peanut butter, butter, marshmallows and salt in top part of double boiler over hot water. Stir constantly until melted and smooth. Combine with popped corn and granola in buttered 9 x 13 x 2-inch pan. Toss until well mixed; press smooth in pan. Melt chocolate over hot, not boiling water; spread over nougat mixture to form lacy pattern. Cool until firm; cut in 1 x 2-inch bars. Makes 4½ dozen.



POPCORN FOR SPECIAL FESTIVITIES

Everyone loves holiday celebrations. We Redenbachers are no exception, because we enjoy entertaining family and friends. Here are some of our popcorn recipes that can add a festive touch to your holiday gatherings.

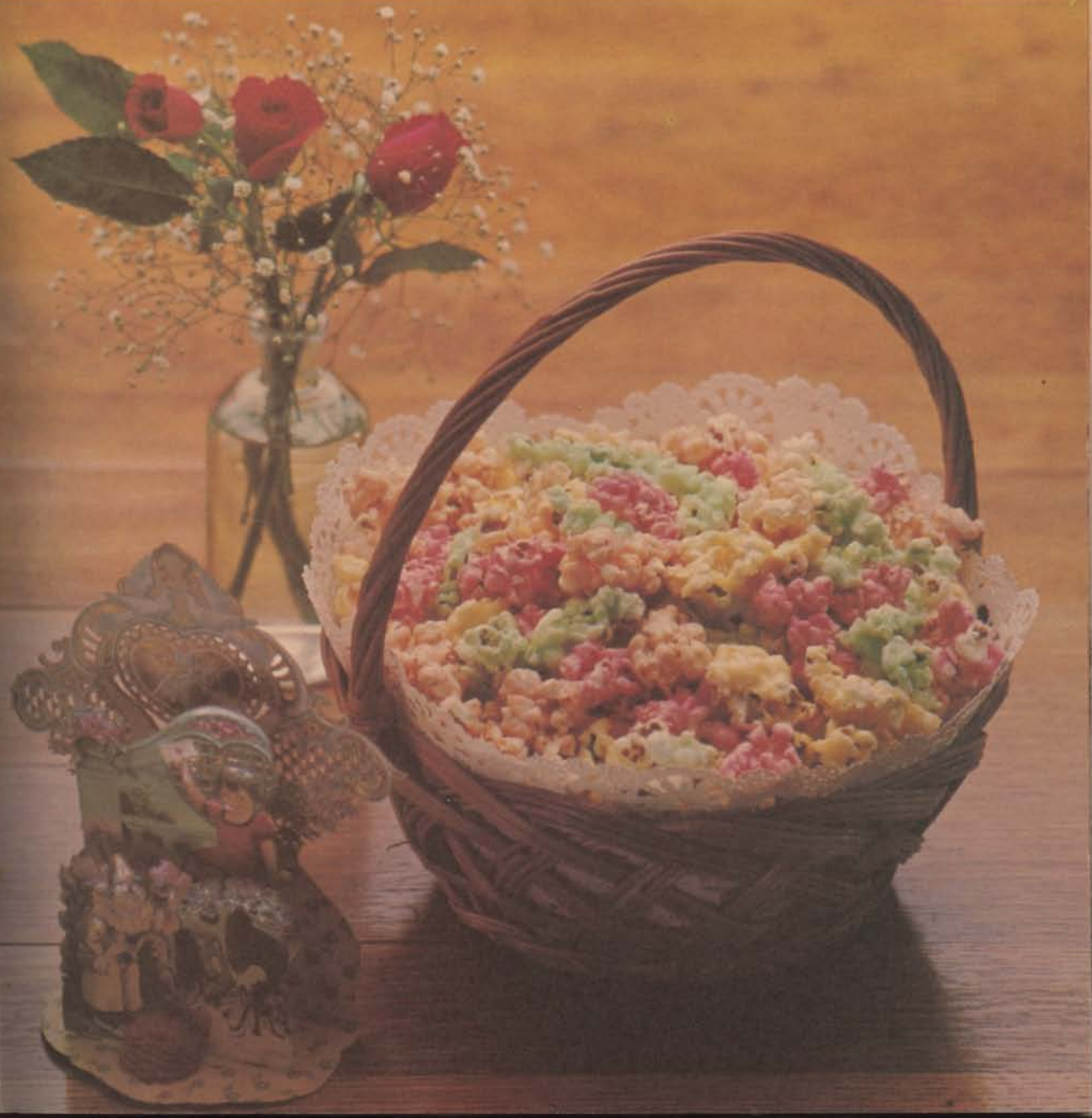


- 4 quarts popped Orville Redenbacher's Gourmet Popping Corn
- 1½ cups granulated sugar
- ½ cup light corn syrup
- 2 Tablesp. butter
- ½ teasp. salt
- ¼ teasp. cream of tartar
- 3 to 4 Tablesp. any flavor gelatin dessert
- 1 teasp. baking soda

POPCORN PASTELS

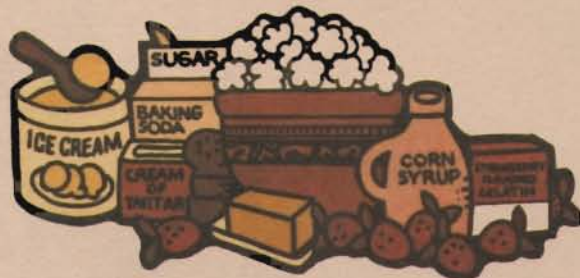
This versatile recipe can be made with any flavor gelatin to tie-in to a holiday theme—we use red gelatin when serving the dish for Valentine's Day, green for St. Patrick's Day parties and orange for Halloween.

Keep freshly-popped corn warm in large baking pan in oven at 200°. In medium saucepan combine sugar, corn syrup, butter, salt and cream of tartar. Bring to boil, stirring constantly. Cook to 250° (hard ball stage) without stirring. Stir in flavored gelatin, continue cooking about 1 minute to 260°. Remove from heat. Add soda and stir in quickly but thoroughly. Pour at once while foamy over warm popcorn; mix gently to coat corn. Return to oven; bake at 200° 1 hour. Stir 2 or 3 times. Cool completely. Separate into small pieces. Store in tightly covered containers. Makes 4 quarts.



PINK BIRTHDAY PARTY PIE

Popcorn Pie Crust is so delicious that I have developed lots of ways to serve it. I've tasted them all and given them the Popcorn King's seal of royal approval. You can make it ahead of time, and that's handy for parties.



- ¾ cup granulated sugar
- ¼ cup light corn syrup
- 1 Tablesp. butter
- ¼ teasp. salt
- ⅛ teasp. cream of tartar
- 1 to 2 Tablesp. strawberry flavored gelatin
- ½ teasp. baking soda
- 1 qt. popped Orville Redenbacher's Gourmet Popping Corn
- 1 qt. French vanilla ice cream, slightly softened
- Fresh strawberries, halved

Combine sugar, corn syrup, butter, salt and cream of tartar in 1 quart saucepan. Bring to boil, stirring constantly. Cook, without stirring, to 250° (hard ball stage). Stir in strawberry flavored gelatin; continue cooking about 1 minute to 260°. Remove from heat. Add soda and stir quickly but thoroughly. Pour at once while foamy over popped corn in bowl; mix gently to coat thoroughly. Press, with lightly buttered fingers, onto bottom and sides of buttered 9 or 10 inch pie pan. Bake at 200° 45 minutes. Cool. Fill with ice cream, spreading smooth with back of spoon. Arrange strawberry halves cut side down in pattern over top. Serve at once or freeze until ready to serve.* Makes 6 servings.

*When freezing pie, do not add strawberries until just before serving.

FOR OTHER SPECIAL OCCASIONS

Valentine's Party Use raspberry flavored gelatin; press onto bottom and sides of buttered heart shaped mold before baking. Cool and fill with raspberry sherbet. Decorate with puffs of whipped cream.

Halloween Party Use orange flavored gelatin; fill baked and cooled pie shell with chocolate ice cream. Garnish with whipped cream and sprinkle with confetti cake decorations.

Christmas Party Use cherry flavored gelatin; prepare popcorn crust in Christmas mold if desired. Cool and fill with pistachio ice cream. Garnish with whipped cream and a sprinkle of red or green fine cake decorating candy crystals.



HARVEST PUMPKIN BALL

Harvest pumpkin ball is my personal favorite popcorn party decoration because it's so good looking—and you can eat it.



- ¼ cup water
- 1 teasp. pumpkin pie spice
- ¼ teasp. salt
- 1 lb. vanilla caramels (about 64)
- 4 qts. popped Orville Redenbacher's Gourmet Popping Corn
- Shoestring licorice
- Green gumdrops

Combine water, pumpkin pie spice and salt in top of double boiler; mix well. Add caramels; melt over hot water, stirring often, until smooth. Pour mixture over popped corn in large bowl; toss until kernels are well coated. With lightly buttered hands, form into pumpkin shape measuring about 8 inches in diameter at the bottom and about 4½ inches high at the center. Make 7 or 8 slight indentations from center to bottom to form pumpkin "sections." Cut strips of shoestring licorice and press down center of each indentation. Use green gumdrops to make pumpkin "stem." Arrange with cornucopia of fresh red and green apples, grapes and nuts and use as centerpiece for table.

ORVILLE'S POPCORN PLEASERS

- Serve a big bowl of fresh, hot buttered popcorn on the table in place of crackers with soup . . . especially good with clam chowder.
- Toss some Popcorn Party Mix into green salad instead of the usual croutons.
- Sprinkle a bowl of freshly popped corn generously with grated Parmesan cheese and serve with chili suppers.





Boyhood home, Clay County, Indiana, 1907



All my 4-H ribbons, 1924



Cross-country track, Purdue, 1928



Manager of Princeton Farms, 1950



Florida popcorn seed nursery, 1963



Official popcorn of Disneyland and Disney World, 1977

A Little About Me.

I was born and reared in Indiana, and my taste for popcorn developed right at home. Dad grew it in our garden, so naturally popcorn was one of our favorite family treats. During grade school and high school, I made my spending money raising popcorn.

My alma mater, Purdue University pioneered research in popcorn hybridization, back in the twenties, while I was working for my B.S. in agriculture. It took my fancy, so I went on to do graduate work in agronomy and plant breeding at Colorado State.

During the years when I taught agriculture and worked as a County Farm Agent here in Indiana, I was still especially fascinated with the production of hybrid corn and popcorn seed. In fact, I organized and for 10 years managed Princeton Farms where we grew hybrid popcorn seed and commercial popcorn.

In 1952, Charles Bowman, my friend since Purdue, and I went into business for ourselves, and after a bit Carl Hartman, who is a truly fine professional plant breeder, joined our team. Working together we developed the genuinely superior popping

corn I had been searching for since boyhood.

Well, the popcorn industry didn't want it, because it had to cost a bit more! I am stubborn and I am not shy, so I put my special corn in jars to keep it fresh and put my own name on the label and got some local stores to carry it. I was right. You people do appreciate a better product when you find one. Hunt-Wesson Foods recognized the product quality too, and is now distributing my Gourmet Popping Corn all across the country and I have to write a book like this because my corn gets so many fan letters!

I still oversee the growing and production of Orville Redenbacher's Gourmet Popping Corn, and I am still just as fussy about it. In the off-seasons, I have travelled to 85 other countries with the government's People-to-People program, to help their agricultural experts improve their popping corn quality and yield.

When we get to relax at home, my lovely wife Nina and I live here in Valparaiso, Indiana, enjoying our children and grandchildren, friends and neighbors. It is still our favorite corner of the world.

