

How to Pop “Popcorn” Corn

RECIPE

This is a classroom friendly recipe on how to prepare any “popcorn” variety of corn.

Harvest Directions

- Corn will be ready to harvest when the husks have dried and the kernels are plump, well-colored and shiny.
- Remove the husks and dry the cobs fully in a cool, well-ventilated place for at least a month.
- Test if they’re ready by shelling and attempting to pop several kernels; if they don’t pop or if the popped corn is chewy or jagged, try again after several more days of drying.
- Remove the kernels from the cobs once they’re fully dry. (SGN tip- rub two pieces of corn together to help remove the kernels and wear gloves to protect your hands.)
- Pick out any pieces of husk or silks from the stored corn kernels - these will burn if it is included when popping the corn.
- Store the kernels in an air-tight container until you’re ready to pop them, preferably in the refrigerator to keep them as fresh and bug-free as possible. If stored well, they should retain their popping quality for several years.

How to Cook on A Stove Top

Ingredients for enough popcorn for a classroom of around 20 students

- 3 cups popcorn kernels
- 3/4 cups of oil (high smoke point oil- coconut, peanut, grape seed or vegetable)
- salt and butter (we will explore other fun flavor add-ons below!)

Directions

- Start with a big heavy-duty saucepan (around 5 quarts). Dutch Ovens work great.
- Add popcorn kernels to the pot.
- Add oil.
- Put on the lid and turn the burner on high.
- 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.
- 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.

Flavor Add Ons

- Keep it classic with butter and salt or kick things up a notch with these fun flavor add-ons!
- Spice it up with a drizzle of siracha or a sprinkle of tajin
- Keep your popcorn vegan without compromising flavor by using nutritional yeast
- Toss with cheese powder
- Sprinkle in cinnamon and a small amount of sugar for a special sweet treat

Recipe created for The School Garden Network’s Cooking From The Garden program.