

Have a Ball

It's National Popcorn Poppin' Month

The autumn season brings out witches, goblins and ghosts and one of the most favorite celebrations of the year: National Popcorn Poppin' Month.

For the child in us all there's also Halloween, but National Popcorn Poppin' Month is a month-long celebration, which means plenty of time to enjoy America's most popular "poppable" snack. Grab a handful and you're helping consume some of the 16 billion quarts Americans eat each year. That's roughly 51 quarts per man, woman and child.

Popcorn's popularity is partially due to its irresistible aroma and taste, but it's also a food that's long been a part of American culture, associated with good times. Curious kids love watching the magical transformation from a hard seed to soft, fluffy snack while budget conscious parents love its "cheap eats" status. And everyone can appreciate that popcorn is a whole grain, providing carbohydrates and fiber to the diet, and naturally low in fat and calories.

With all those reasons to love popcorn (as if you really needed them) why not scare up this frightfully good treat, compliments of the Popcorn Board (www.popcorn.com).

Witchy Popcorn Balls

Makes: 8 (4-inch) popcorn balls

Preparation time: 40 minutes

Ingredients:

- 16 chocolate wafer cookies
- 3 quarts popped popcorn
- 4 tablespoons (1/2 stick) butter or margarine
- 3 cups miniature marshmallows
- 3 tablespoons (1/2 of a 3-ounce box) lime gelatin dessert mix
- Green food color, optional
- 8 chocolate ice cream cones
- 3/4 cup chocolate chips
- Orange sugar sprinkles, placed in a small dish
- Jelly beans, candy corn, licorice string



Directions:

1. Spread a sheet of wax (or parchment) paper over a work surface and place the wafer cookies on it.
2. Spray a large mixing bowl with cooking spray and place popcorn inside.
3. In a medium saucepan, melt butter over low heat. Stir in marshmallows and gelatin dessert powder until marshmallows are melted and mixture is smooth. If desired, adjust color with a drop or 2 of food color. Pour over popcorn and mix well until coated.
4. Spray hands with cooking spray and press firmly to form into 8 balls. Place balls on 8 of the wafer cookies. Press candy decorations into popcorn balls to form eyes, nose and mouth.
5. Place chocolate chips in a small microwave-safe bowl. Cover and heat for 10 seconds. Stir chocolate to aid melting. Repeat as needed until chocolate is melted and smooth.
6. Spoon about 1/2 teaspoon melted chocolate onto the top of each popcorn ball. Press a few licorice strings into chocolate to form 'hair'.
7. Dip cone edges into melted chocolate and then into orange sugar sprinkles. Place on remaining wafer cookies to form witches hat. Place hats onto popcorn balls. Allow chocolate to set for about 45 minutes before serving.
8. Serve or seal individually in plastic wrap for storage.