



It's Wintertime and the Snackin' is Easy...

Could it be that winter is the new summer? Once defined as a time of quiet hibernation, winter has come into its own, in a social sense. In fact, we are often busier entertaining friends and family in the winter than during any other season. Consider the numerous celebratory occasions that begin with the harvest and continue on through the holidays and beyond, not to mention all the fun and frosty get-togethers prompted by skiing, skating and sledding. Truly, the winter social calendar can be downright exhausting! Luckily, by keeping a few simple ingredients on hand, you can whip up tantalizing popcorn snack recipes to feed—and please—crowds of party-goers, carolers, or game-day fans. Since popcorn is a whole-grain that provides carbohydrates and fiber to the diet, and since it's naturally low in fat, you can even feel good about serving it! As an added bonus, these recipes will fill your home with the comforting fragrance of favorite wintry flavors.

This colorful White Chocolate Peppermint Bark packs both a festive punch and a sweet crunch.

White Chocolate Peppermint Popcorn Bark

5 cups popped popcorn
12 ounces white chocolate baking chips, chopped
white chocolate or white candy coating
1 cup crushed hard candy peppermints

- Cover a baking pan with foil or wax paper; set aside. Place popcorn in a large bowl; set aside.
- Melt chocolate in a double boiler over barely simmering water, stirring until smooth OR melt according to package directions.
- Stir in crushed peppermints after chocolate is melted. Pour chocolate mixture over popcorn mixture and stir to coat.

- Spread onto prepared pan; allow to cool completely. When chocolate is cooled and set, break into chunks for serving. Store in an air-tight container at room temperature.

Variation: White Chocolate Popcorn Crunch:

Omit candy peppermints. Mix ½ cup dried sweetened cranberries and ½ cup sliced almonds with the popcorn. Pour chocolate over the mixture after it is melted.

Yield: about 1 pound

Served warm from the oven, this Gingersnap Popcorn Snack Mix is perfect for a cozy get-together around the fire.

Gingersnap Popcorn Snack Mix

2 quarts popped popcorn
Butter flavored cooking spray
1/3 cup granulated sugar substitute
2 tsp. ground ginger
1/2 tsp. freshly ground nutmeg
1/4 tsp. cinnamon
1/4 tsp. ground cloves
1/8 tsp. freshly ground black or white pepper

- Preheat oven to 325°F. Spread popcorn on baking sheet and spray lightly with the cooking spray. Combine remaining ingredients in a small bowl and sprinkle evenly over popcorn. Spray again with cooking spray and toss to coat evenly. Bake 7 minutes and serve warm.

Yield: 2 quarts