

Have a Ball

It's National Popcorn Poppin' Month

October is National Popcorn Poppin' Month, a time to celebrate the granddaddy of all snack foods. Long before grocer's aisles were filled with refined designer treats, Native Americans discovered the simple goodness of tossing dried popcorn kernels into a roaring fire and letting nature do her thing.

Popcorn has been around for thousands of years, yet despite its old age, popcorn is still in great shape. Popcorn is a whole grain that provides carbohydrates and fiber to the diet and is naturally low in fat and calories. That's good news for the millions of Americans who are concerned about health and obesity issues. And for mere pennies per serving, popcorn is gentle on the wallet and the waistline.

Aside from popcorn's healthful and economical status, there's an even more important reason why we consume some 16 billion quarts of popcorn each year. It smells great and tastes even better. Gussied up or dressed down, popcorn compliments a wide variety of flavors, although many people enjoy it with just a dash of salt.

Try your hand at creating a popcorn masterpiece in honor of Popcorn Poppin' Month. The following recipe from the Popcorn Board (www.popcorn.com) pays homage to two classic Halloween icons: the pumpkin and the popcorn ball. Popcorn balls were once *the* quintessential Halloween handout. The house that gave them away was always the hit of the neighborhood. Make a batch for your hungry haunters or just to have around the home. You'll have a ball making this sweet American treat.



Halloween Jack-O-Lantern Popcorn Balls

Fast, easy and colorful, these popcorn balls are fun to make too!

Makes: 8 (4-inch) balls



- 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) orange gelatin dessert mix
- Candy corn, jellybeans and sour green apple candy sticks, licorice string, dried fruit, etc.
- Spray a large mixing bowl lightly with cooking spray and place popcorn inside.
- In a medium saucepan, melt butter over low heat. Stir in marshmallows

and gelatin dessert powder until marshmallows are melted and mixture is smooth. Pour over popcorn and mix well until coated.

- Spray hands with cooking spray and press firmly to form into balls. Place balls on wax paper. Press candy decorations into balls to form eyes, a stem and a Jack-O-Lantern grin. Serve immediately or wrap individually in plastic wrap for storage. Add a ribbon tie to plastic wrap as a decorative closure.

Clean-up tip: Soak saucepan before cleaning.