

Warm Spices Make Fall Recipes Pop



Spices are the key to great cooking year round, but especially during the holiday season. What would apple cider, gingerbread cookies or pumpkin pie be without their distinct spicy flavors? Bland! Spices, whether subtle or bold, make the difference between an average meal and a memorable one.

Fall is an earth-toned season filled with a pallet of warm colors, so it's fitting that we also connect the season with "warm" spices. Warm spices are known for their strong and fragrant flavor and include cinnamon, ginger, nutmeg, cloves and cardamom. Variations of these spices are mixed together and sold as pumpkin spices, gingerbread spices and garam masala.

As the weather cools, try combining these warm flavors with another fall favorite—popcorn. Popcorn is a whole grain that provides carbohydrates and fiber to the diet and is naturally low in fat and calories. Consuming at least 3 or more ounce equivalents of whole grains per day can reduce the risk of several chronic diseases and may help with weight maintenance. That's good news for your waistline. As health-conscious cooks look for ways to add taste appeal to snacks like popcorn, pairing them with warm spices is a great solution.

Cinnamon-Spice Berry Popcorn

6 cups air-popped popcorn
3 tbsp. brown sugar
3 tbsp. light corn syrup
1 1/2 tsp. cinnamon
1/4 tsp. ginger
1/4 tsp. nutmeg
1/8 tsp. cloves
1 1/2 tbsp. light margarine
1/2 cup Craisins

- Combine brown sugar, corn syrup, spices, and margarine in microwave-safe bowl; cook on HIGH heat for 2 1/2 minutes until bubbly hot.
- Add Craisins to popcorn; toss with hot sugar mixture until well coated. Cool mixture before serving or store in airtight container.

Serves: 4

Maple Pumpkin Spice Popcorn

2 tbsp. brown sugar
2 tbsp. maple syrup
1 1/2 tsp. pumpkin spice mix
1 tbsp. butter or margarine
1/2 cup chopped pecans, optional
5 cups popped popcorn

- In a large saucepan or pot, heat brown sugar, maple syrup and pumpkin pie spice mix over medium heat. Cook, stirring, 3 minutes or until sugar is dissolved and mixture is bubbling. Stir in butter until melted and well blended. Add pecans, if desired, and popcorn and stir until well coated.
- Allow mixture to cool before serving. Serve immediately or store in an airtight container.

Yield: 5 cups



Maple Pumpkin Spice Popcorn