Baseball fever is running high and fans are root-root-rooting for the home team as the season gets underway. Whether you are part of the crowd gathered at a major league ballpark or little league stand, sitting hunched over your 5-inch black and white or lounging in front of the plasma TV, baseball is best enjoyed in the company of another All-American—Popcorn!

Like baseball, popcorn is a product of the Americas and has been around for thousands of years. Yet over time, it has remained a simple little kernel of goodness. Wholesome and whole grain, popcorn contains energy-producing carbohydrates and provides needed fiber to the diet. And, popcorn is naturally low in fat and calories—a great asset for a team player.

If your fan has a serious case of baseball fever, offer them a homemade remedy that is sure to cure.

The following recipe appeals to the heartiest of appetites. We mix bacon and cheese, which pairs perfectly with popcorn for the ultimate guy food, but gals will love it too.

**Bacon and Cheese Popcorn**

Makes: 4 quarts, 32 servings
(1/2 cup each)

Preparation time: 5 minutes

- 4 quarts popped popcorn
- 1/3 cup butter or margarine
- 1/4 teaspoon hickory liquid smoke seasoning
- 1/3 cup grated Parmesan cheese
- 1 teaspoon seasoned salt or kosher salt

- Place popcorn in a large serving bowl. Place butter in a small bowl and melt in microwave, about 20 seconds. Stir liquid smoke into butter. Pour butter mixture over popcorn and toss to distribute evenly.
- Sprinkle bacon bits, Parmesan cheese and salt over popcorn. Toss and serve immediately.

Looking to re-create a classic ballpark favorite? Just add peanuts to this Easy Oven Caramel Popcorn recipe and hide a tiny surprise in each bowl for kids young and old alike.

No need for a candy thermometer to make this foolproof, crunchy caramel corn.

**Easy Oven Caramel Corn**

Makes: 5 quarts, 40 servings
(1/2 cup each)

Preparation time: 15 minutes

Baking time: 1 hour

- 5 quarts popped popcorn
- 1 cup (2 sticks) butter or margarine
- 2 cups brown sugar, packed firmly
- 1/2 cup light corn syrup
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 tablespoon vanilla
- 1/2 teaspoon baking soda
- Optional nuts - choose one:
  - 1 cup salted peanuts
  - 1 cup whole almonds
  - 1 cup pecan halves

- Preheat oven to 250 degrees F. Line a large, rimmed baking pan (17 x 12-inch) with foil and spray lightly with cooking spray.
- Spray a large mixing bowl (not plastic) lightly with cooking spray and place popcorn inside. Spread optional nuts over popcorn, if desired.
- In a medium saucepan, over medium heat, combine butter, brown sugar, corn syrup and salt. Bring to a boil over medium heat, stirring constantly. Lower heat and boil 5 minutes, stirring frequently. Quickly stir in vanilla and baking soda.
- Quickly pour hot mixture over popcorn; stir well to coat. Spread evenly into prepared pan and bake 1 hour, stirring every 15 minutes. Cool completely in pan; store in an airtight container.

Clean-up tip: Soak saucepan before cleaning.

For more simple and tasty popcorn recipes, visit www.popcorn.org