

Chicago Popcorn

The recipe for cheddar popcorn is slightly adapted from Alton Brown. He uses butter to make the cheese powder mixture stick to the popcorn, but butter is 80% fat and 20% water. The water content will make your popcorn soggy after a few hours. If you want to make this ahead of time, use clarified butter. The process of clarifying butter removes the water and solves the soggy popcorn problem. It is very easy to make clarified butter. I have included a recipe below, from serious eats.com.

The caramel popcorn recipe is very slightly adapted from the charming blog, Sally's Baking Addiction

Cheddar Popcorn

- ½ cup Cheddar cheese powder
- 2 Tablespoons Kraft Parmesan cheese-food (meaning the stuff in the green can)
- 2 tablespoons nutritional yeast
- 1 teaspoon buttermilk powder
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- 3 tablespoon canola oil
- ½ cup popcorn kernels
- 3 tablespoon canola oil
- 4 Tablespoons clarified unsalted butter, melted* (recipe for clarified butter below)

1. Process the cheddar powder, Kraft Parmesan cheese, nutritional yeast, buttermilk powder and kosher salt in a food processor to a fine, granular powder.
2. Place the oil and 3 popcorn kernels in a heavy 4-5 quart pot (Le Creuset is ideal for this), Cover with lid and turn on heat to high. Listen carefully for the kernels to pop. Once the first 3 kernels have popped, remove them and add the remaining kernels. Cover and take the pot off of the heat. Wait 30 seconds. Put the pot back on the heat. Cook, shaking the pot occasionally until the popping slows down. After about 2 minutes, and the popping has slowed down, take the lid off of the pot. This lets the steam out and keeps the popcorn crisp. Pour popcorn into a large mixing bowl.
3. Drizzle melted clarified butter over popcorn. Sprinkle the powdered cheese mixture over the popcorn and, using your hands, mix well until all the popcorn is evenly coated.

Caramel Popcorn

- ½ cup popcorn kernels
- 3 tablespoon canola oil
- 1 cup (200g) packed light brown sugar

¼ cup (80g) light corn syrup
½ cup (115g) unsalted butter
1 teaspoon kosher salt
½ teaspoon baking soda

1. Place the oil and 3 popcorn kernels in a heavy 4-5 quart pot (Le Creuset is ideal for this), Cover with lid and turn on heat to high. Listen carefully for the kernels to pop. Once the first 3 kernels have popped, remove them and add the remaining kernels. Cover and take the pot off of the heat. Wait 30 seconds. Put the pot back on the heat. Cook, shaking the pot occasionally until the popping slows down. After about 2 minutes, and the popping has slowed down, take the lid off of the pot. This lets the steam out and keeps the popcorn crisp.
2. Preheat the oven to 200°F. Spread the popcorn out onto 2 large baking sheets. Set aside. Spray 2 spatulas or wooden spoons with non-stick cooking spray.
3. Combine the sugar, corn syrup, butter, and salt in a medium saucepan over a medium-high heat. Stir constantly and bring to a boil for about 5 minutes. Remove from the heat and quickly stir in the baking soda. Pour half the caramel over the popcorn and, using the sprayed spatulas or wooden spoons, stir gently until all the kernels are coated. Repeat with the second baking sheet of popcorn.
4. Bake for 1 hour, stirring every 20 minutes. Allow popcorn to cool on the pan and break apart large clusters if desired. Cover the popcorn tightly once cooled.

Store the cheddar and caramel popcorn separately. They will keep for about 2 weeks in airtight containers.

Clarified Butter

This makes more than you will need, but the extra will keep in the fridge for 6 months.

2 sticks unsalted butter, cut into 1 inch cubes

1. In a small saucepan, melt butter over medium-high heat. Continue to cook over medium-high heat; an even layer of white milk proteins will float to the surface. Bring to a boil; the milk proteins will become foamy. Lower heat to medium and continue to gently boil; the milk proteins will break apart.
2. As the butter gently boils, the milk proteins will eventually sink to the bottom of the pot, and the boiling will begin to calm and then cease.
3. Once boiling has stopped, pour butter through a cheesecloth-lined strainer or through a coffee filter into a heatproof container to remove browned milk solids. Let cool, then transfer to a sealed container and refrigerate until ready to use. Clarified butter should keep for at least 6 months in the refrigerator.