

CARAMEL POPCORN

Makes four quart jars, six pint jars, and some caramel corn to spare.

INGREDIENTS

Set 1

1 ½ cups corn kernels (measures about 36 cups of popped corn)
¼ c. + 2 T. vegetable oil

Set 2

1 c. sweet cream, unsalted butter
2 c. packed light brown sugar
½ c. light corn syrup
1 tsp. salt
½ tsp. baking soda

Set 3

1 c. unshelled, roasted, unsalted peanuts

Tools: Orville Redenbacher's or other brand's oil-based popcorn popper, non-stick pan spray, 2 very long cake pans with 2-inch lip, 1 medium cake pan with 2-inch lip, 1 medium pot, 2 rubber spatulas, freezer bags or canning jars, trivet, large wooden spoon

Note: I use the Wilton rectangular cake pans measuring in lengths 13, 15 and 18 inches. All pans are 2 inches deep.

DIRECTIONS

Pop the kernels

1. Pop all of the corn kernels according to the directions of your popcorn popper. For Orville's, pour 3 tablespoons of vegetable oil into the base of the popcorn popper. Sprinkle ¾ cups of corn kernels over the oil. Be sure to remove the butter cover from the popper's bowl then place the bowl over the base of the popper. **DO NOT** put any butter in the butter's designated space.
2. Put the popper under the oven vent and turn the vent on; this just pulls the steam out of your kitchen once the kernels start popping. Plug the popper into the outlet to turn it on.
3. After about 2 to 3 minutes, the kernels will begin to pop. Let the popper do its thing. Once there are barely any kernels popping, unplug the machine to turn it off. Empty the popcorn into one of the baking pans. **DUST THE BASE OF THE POPPER WITH SEVERAL DRY NAPKINS.**
4. Pour 3 more tablespoons of oil into the now-hot base. Add ¾ cups of kernels, cover, then plug the popper in and cook. Empty the popcorn into the other pan(s), distributing all of the popcorn to fill the pans relatively equal.
5. Distribute the cup of peanuts relatively equal into each pan.

PREHEAT THE OVEN TO 250 degrees Fahrenheit.

Make the caramel

1. Place the butter, corn syrup, brown sugar and the salt in the saucepan.
2. Bring this mixture to a boil over medium heat. Stir constantly.
3. Once it boils, reduce the heat to half way between low and medium.
4. Clean the sides of the pan with a rubber spatula.
5. Let this boil for 5 minutes without stirring.
6. Take this off the burner and place on the trivet.

7. Stir in the baking soda.
8. Pour some of the caramel over the popcorn in the two large baking sheets.
9. RESERVE some caramel for the small baking sheet; you'll pour this later.
10. Use two spatulas to somewhat coat the popcorn and peanuts with caramel in both pans; do this for a minute, just UNTIL THE CARAMEL COOLS ENOUGH SO YOU CAN TOUCH IT.
11. SPRAY BOTH HANDS WITH NON-STICK SPRAY. USE BOTH HANDS to more thoroughly combine the caramel with the popcorn.
12. Add more caramel to the big pans if necessary, ensuring you have enough to pour into the small pan; use a CLEAN rubber spatula to get as much caramel out of the pot as possible.
13. Pour the remaining caramel into the small pan. Use the spatulas again to combine until mixtures are cool enough to touch. Use both hands to more thoroughly combine the caramel in the small pan.
14. Spread the mixture evenly into a thin layer throughout each pan.
15. Place one pan on the top rack and to the left of the oven. Put the other pan on the bottom rack and to the far right of the oven. Balance the third pan between one pan and the side of the oven.
16. Bake for 15 minutes.
17. Remove the top pan. Stir then spread the mixture out evenly again.
18. Remove the other pans. Place the first pan on the bottom rack and to the far right.
19. Stir the second / third pan(s) then spread the mixture out evenly.
20. Place this/these pan(s) on the top and to the far left.
21. Bake for 15 minutes. Stir and rearrange pans again, alternating top to bottom and left to right.
22. Repeat for four more, 15-minute intervals, totaling 1 ½ hours of baking.
23. Take the pans out of the oven and cool completely.
24. Store in air-tight freezer bags or mason jars.