



# Five Easy Recipes Flavored Popcorn

We left no kernel unpopped in our search for crispy, light stovetop popcorn.

BY NICK IVERSON

SURE IT'S EASY to make, but microwave popcorn can be greasy, salty, and full of unpopped kernels at the bottom of the bag. If you try to compensate by popping it longer, it's easy to burn. Then there's the "artificial butter flavor," which can't hold a candle to real butter. If microwave popcorn is what you've become accustomed to, you owe it to yourself to revisit the genuine article: stovetop popcorn.

The test kitchen has developed an easy, foolproof stovetop method for popcorn. It starts with heating three kernels in vegetable oil in a medium saucepan. When the test kernels pop, you know the oil is hot enough—but don't dump in the rest of the kernels yet. Pull the pan off the heat first; then pour in the kernels and let them sit, covered and undisturbed, for 30 seconds before putting the pan back on the burner. This resting period preheats the raw popcorn so that it pops quickly and evenly, with a minimum of unpopped kernels, when returned to the heat.

There's no need to shake the pan; just keep the lid slightly ajar and wait for the popping to slow to about 2 seconds between pops. That's it. Now you have light, crispy popcorn in the same few minutes that it takes to make the much-inferior microwave variety.

You can, of course, simply toss the popcorn with melted butter and salt and settle into your couch to watch a movie. But if you're like me, you might want some flavor variations to keep it interesting. A ranch version flavored with buttermilk, onion, and garlic powders and fresh herbs is perfect for a western. Cinnamon, malt powder, and brown sugar provide a sweet twist for that romantic comedy. A combination of Parmesan cheese and black pepper is a great match for your favorite mafia flick. And Sriracha (Asian chili-garlic sauce) and lime zest give the popcorn



Melted butter is just for starters .

a spicy kick fit for an action-packed martial arts movie.

**BUTTERED POPCORN** Makes 14 cups  
You don't need to shake the pan as the corn pops

- 3 tablespoons vegetable oil
- ½ cup popcorn kernels
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted
- ¼ teaspoon salt

1. Heat oil and 3 kernels in large saucepan over medium-high heat until kernels pop. Remove pan from heat, add remaining kernels, cover, and let sit for 30 seconds.

2. Return pan to medium-high heat. Continue to cook with lid slightly ajar until popping slows to about 2 seconds between pops. Transfer popcorn to large bowl. Add melted butter and toss to coat popcorn. Add salt and toss to combine. Serve.

**BUTTERMILK RANCH POPCORN**  
Add 1 tablespoon buttermilk powder, 1 tablespoon chopped fresh cilantro, 2 teaspoons dried dill, ¼ teaspoon garlic powder, and ¼ teaspoon onion powder to salt

**CINNAMON-MALT POPCORN**  
Add 2 tablespoons malted milk powder, 2 tablespoons packed brown sugar, and 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon to salt.

**PARMESAN-PEPPER POPCORN**  
Add ½ cup grated Parmesan and 2 teaspoons pepper to salt.

**SRIRACHA-LIME POPCORN**  
Add 1½ teaspoons Sriracha sauce to melted butter. Add 1 teaspoon grated lime zest to salt.

## TEST KITCHEN TECHNIQUE Leave Lid Ajar

With our method, you don't have to shake the pan steadily—or at all—while the corn pops. But do keep the lid slightly ajar so the steam, but not the popping kernels, can escape, guaranteeing crispy, light popcorn.

**CRACK THE LID**  
A key to perfect popcorn.

