

CARAMEL POPCORN BALLS

You can buy caramel corn in the store. But like most things, it's better when homemade. Cheaper, too!

by Corporate Chef Kurt Kwaitkowski

Featured Food: Popcorn

Yield: Makes 10-12 popcorn balls

Ingredients

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|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| 3 T. coconut oil | 1 T. molasses |
| ½ c. red popcorn kernels | 3 T. butter |
| 1 c. sugar | 1 t. kosher salt |
| ¼ c. water | 1 t. pure vanilla extract |
| ¾ c. honey | |

Preparation

Make the popcorn: In a large pan with a lid, warm coconut oil over medium-high heat. Place 3 popcorn kernels into the oil and wait for them to pop. After they pop add the rest of the kernels to the hot oil, put the lid on the pan, and remove the pan from the heat. Wait 30 seconds. Return the pan to the heat with the lid set slightly ajar. Once the kernels start to pop, lightly move the pan around on the burner. Once the popping pretty much stops, dump the popcorn into a large bowl. You will need 12 to 16 cups of popcorn for this recipe.

Make the syrup: In a heavy sauce pan over medium-low heat, warm the sugar, water, honey, and molasses for about 5 minutes and stir just until the sugar has dissolved. DO NOT stir or shake the pan anymore. Over medium-high heat, bring syrup temperature up to 245 - 275°F. The longer you boil the syrup, the harder the popcorn balls will be. The syrup will turn a deep amber color. Remove pan from the heat. Immediately add all the butter at once; be careful as it will have a tendency to bubble up. Add the salt and vanilla to the mixture. Whisk thoroughly.

Form popcorn balls: Pour the caramel mixture over the popcorn and stir well with a wooden spoon or silicone spatula. Lightly grease your hands or put on food-quality disposable gloves. As soon as the mixture is cool enough to handle, quickly shape into 3" balls. Dip your gloved hands in cold water occasionally to prevent the mixture from sticking to your hands.