

Facts Page

What Makes it Pop?

Popcorn is a whole grain maize product—it is grown extensively in the corn belt states of the U.S., where the majority of popcorn sold worldwide is grown. It resembles corn-on-the-cob in appearance and cultivation, although only popcorn kernels have the ability to pop. Popcorn can be ear-harvested, where the whole ear of corn is cut and stored for eight to twelve months, until the moisture levels in the kernels reach optimum levels. At this point, the kernels are stripped from the cobs and graded to eliminate ones that are too small to pop efficiently.

Popcorn can also be harvested by the combine method where the corn cobs are picked and shelled simultaneously. The kernels are then dried with hot forced air, packed and distributed for sale.

Popcorn's ability to pop lies in the fact that the kernels contain a small amount of water stored in a circle of soft starch inside the hard outer casing. When heated, the water expands, creating pressure within, until eventually the casing gives way, and the kernels explode and pop, allowing the water to escape as steam, turning the kernels inside out.

Although the early Indian corn carried no popping guarantee, popcorn brands today vow at least 99 percent of the kernels will pop. The key is a constantly improved product. Throughout the years, popcorn processors have implemented significant hybrid popcorn seed research to continually enhance their product.

It's Naturally Nutritious

It is hard to believe a snack food that tastes so good can actually be good for you. Here are some facts that show how popcorn is a perfectly sensible snack to fit into any meal/fitness plan.

- Popcorn contains fiber, providing roughage the body needs in the daily diet.
- Popcorn is low in calories—only 31- 55 calories in one cup of unbuttered, and when lightly buttered, one cup still only has 133 calories.
- Popcorn has no artificial additives or preservatives, and is sugar-free.
- Popcorn contains energy-producing carbohydrates.
- Popcorn is ideal for between-meal snacking, since it satisfies and doesn't spoil an appetite.
- Popcorn inspires creativity. While there is no doubt hot buttered popcorn is pleasing to most palates, popcorn also can be enjoyed when combined with seasonings, spices and other foods like raisins, fruit and cheese providing a nutritious, delicious snack.

Compared to many snack foods, popcorn is low in calories. Air-popped popcorn provides only 30 calories per cup. Popcorn is a high-quality carbohydrate source that is not only low in calories, but high in fiber. This means it takes longer to chew and makes you feel full longer.



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