

Budget- And Figure-Friendly Gifts

(NAPSA)—Great gifts don't have to break the bank. Giving a homemade treat will win hearts and be gentle on your checkbook. And providing a guilt-free snack will be a welcome and healthful alternative to yet another fat-laden goody. That's why popcorn is a great option. Aside from its "whole-grain, naturally low in fat and calories" status, one of the best things about popcorn is its ability to take on a wide range of flavors. Here are healthful versions that will still deliver delicious taste without packing on additional pounds:

Plain Popcorn

Cover the bottom of a 3- to 4-quart pan with a thin layer of vegetable oil. Place 3 kernels of popcorn in the pan, cover with a loose lid that allows steam to escape, and heat. When the kernels pop, pour in enough popcorn to cover the bottom of the pan, one kernel deep, cover the pan and shake to evenly spread the oil. Shake as popcorn continues to pop. When the popping begins to slow to a few seconds apart, remove the pan from the stovetop. The heated oil will still pop the remaining kernels. Sprinkle lightly with popcorn salt, if desired, and store in an airtight container.

Cheesy Popcorn

- 6 cups popped popcorn
- 1 Tbsp. melted butter, optional
- 1 Tbsp. nutritional yeast or brewer's yeast (found at health food stores; adds a cheeselike flavor without the calories or fat)
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. curry powder, optional

Follow the instructions for making Plain Popcorn. When you remove the popcorn from



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the heat, transfer popcorn to a serving bowl, pour butter over popcorn, if desired, and toss. Sprinkle yeast and curry powder, if desired, over popcorn and toss to distribute evenly. Serve immediately or store in an airtight container.

Caramel Popcorn

- 6 cups popped popcorn
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup sugar
- 1 Tbsp. light or dark corn syrup
- 1 Tbsp. water
- 2 Tbsp. butter
- $\frac{1}{8}$ tsp. salt
- $\frac{1}{8}$ tsp. vanilla

Line a large baking sheet with lightly buttered foil. In a medium saucepan, combine sugar, corn syrup and water and bring to a boil. Cook the syrup over medium heat, without stirring, until it becomes amber in color, about 6 minutes. Remove from heat and stir in butter, salt and vanilla until blended. Stir in popcorn until coated. Spread the caramel corn in a single layer onto buttered foil. Allow to cool before breaking into pieces. Store in an airtight container until serving time.

For more great recipes, visit www.popcorn.org.