

# Caramel Cheddar Popcorn

By Melissa Clark

Total Time 45 minutes

Rating ★★★★★ (330)



Linda Xiao for The New York Times.

There's a sweet and salty allure to eating caramel corn and Cheddar popcorn in the same bite, but popcorn purists can keep the two flavors separate. Either way, a giant tin of homemade fancy popcorn is the gift that everyone wants and no one thinks to ask for. And it's a lot less expensive to make yourself than it is to buy. The popcorn will last stored airtight at room temperature for up to two weeks.

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## INGREDIENTS

**Yield:** About 6 quarts (24 cups)

### FOR THE CARAMEL POPCORN

3 quarts popped unsalted popcorn  
(pick out any unpopped kernels)  
¾ cup dark brown sugar  
6 tablespoons unsalted butter  
3 tablespoons corn syrup  
¾ teaspoon fine sea salt  
¾ teaspoon vanilla extract  
1½ teaspoons baking soda

### FOR THE CHEDDAR POPCORN

¾ cup Cheddar powder  
1 tablespoon mustard powder  
½ teaspoon fine sea salt  
3 quarts popped unsalted popcorn  
(pick out any unpopped kernels)  
3 tablespoons unsalted butter,  
melted, plus more if needed

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## PREPARATION

### Step 1

Heat oven to 250 degrees, and line 2 rimmed baking sheets with parchment paper.

### Step 2

Make caramel popcorn: Place popcorn in a very large mixing bowl. In a medium pot, bring brown sugar, butter and corn syrup to a boil. Cook, stirring constantly, until butter and sugar have melted (the mixture should be foamy), about 2 to 3 minutes. Stir in salt and vanilla. Remove from heat, and stir in baking soda. (Mixture should bubble up.)

### Step 3

Immediately pour hot syrup over the popcorn and use a spatula or large spoon to mix it well. Scrape popcorn onto the prepared baking sheets in one layer. Bake until crisp, rotating the pan and tossing popcorn after 15 minutes, 20 to 30 minutes total. To test for doneness, carefully remove a piece of the popcorn, let it cool for 30 seconds or so, then take a bite; if it's crisp, it's done. Set aside to cool.

### Step 4

While the caramel popcorn is in the oven, prepare the Cheddar popcorn: In a mixing bowl, whisk together the Cheddar and mustard powders and salt.

### Step 5

Place popcorn in a very large mixing bowl. Pour melted butter on top of popcorn and toss to combine. Sprinkle Cheddar mixture over popcorn and toss well using a rubber spatula. If the mixture looks dry, add a little more melted butter.

### Step 6

Pour popcorn onto the second prepared baking sheet in one layer. Bake until dry, about 5 to 10 minutes, rotating the pan and tossing

popcorn halfway through. Let cool completely.

**Step 7**

Combine Cheddar and caramel popcorn, or keep them separate, and pack them into tins, jars or bags.

**TIP**

*Cheddar powder is available at spice stores, and online. To pop your own popcorn, heat 3 tablespoons of oil in a large, heavy pot over medium-high heat. Add 3 kernels of popcorn and cover. When it pops, add another 1/3 cup popcorn kernels and reduce heat to medium-low. Partly cover the pot (leaving a crack open and away from you, or use a splatter screen to cover the pot; you want the steam to escape). Continue to cook until the popping stops. Transfer popcorn to a bowl and sprinkle with salt.*

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**Private Notes**

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