

# In The Garden

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## Popcorn

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Americans love popcorn. We each enjoy about 65 quarts of popcorn every year.

Popcorn is a member of the grass family. It is a type of maize or corn. Popcorn comes in 700 varieties. Zea Mays Everta is popcorn's scientific name and it's the only type of corn that will pop.

Popcorn grows in the warm summer months. It is allowed to dry out on the stalk before harvesting. Popcorn comes in two different types, Mushroom and Snowflake. For eating, most people use the Snowflake variety. The Snowflake pops out fluffier. Most candy makers use the Mushroom variety. This type holds the candy coating better.



### History of Popcorn

Native Americans would pop their popcorn right on the cob. They would insert a spear through the end and roast it over an open fire. The kernels would pop and stick right on the cob.

The English colonists ate popcorn at the first Thanksgiving feast in Plymouth, Massachusetts. It was brought as a gift by the Native Americans. The colonists ate the popcorn with milk and sugar. This is the first known breakfast cereal.

**“January 19 is National Popcorn Day! October is National Popcorn Popping Month!”**

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## How Popcorn Pops

The moisture inside the popcorn kernels makes it pop. The level of moisture in dry popcorn should be between 13% to 15%. When heated, the moisture in the kernel turns to steam. When the pressure of the steam builds up to 135 psi, the popcorn kernels will start popping. The kernel temperature will need to reach 356 degrees for popcorn to pop. A popcorn kernel can pop as high as three feet.

The unpopped kernels are called “old maids”. Good popcorn should produce less than 2 percent of “old maids”.

Popcorn pops best when kernels are removed from the cob before popping.

## How to Cook Popcorn in the Microwave

**Remove kernels from cob for best cooking results.**

Ingredients:

1/2 cup popcorn kernels

1 teaspoon vegetable oil

Salt to taste (optional)

Directions:

1. In a small bowl, mix popcorn kernels and oil. Pour mixture into brown paper lunch bag. Fold the bag top twice to seal it.
2. Cook in the microwave on full power 2½ to 3 minutes or until the sound of popcorn popping begins to slow. Pour into serving bowl and season with salt.

**Popcorn is a nutritious whole grain snack. It is naturally low in sugar and fat, and is a good source of fiber.**



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Agriculture and Natural Resources

CalFresh Healthy Living, UCCE-Placer and Nevada Counties  
11477 E Ave., Auburn, CA 95603  
(530) 889-7350 Website: <http://ucanr.edu/sites/letseathealthy/>

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