

Cracker Jack

*from **In Our Grandmothers' Kitchens***

Ingredients:

2 quarts freshly popped popcorn
1 cup roasted shelled peanuts
3 tablespoons butter
1/2 cup brown sugar, VERY firmly packed
5 tablespoons light corn syrup
1 generous tablespoon molasses
1/4 teaspoon salt

Instructions:

Preheat the oven to 250 degrees. Mix together the popcorn and peanuts and place them on a large jelly-roll pan (a cookie sheet with sides) in the preheated oven.

In a small saucepan combine the remaining ingredients. Over medium heat, bring the mixture to a boil, stirring. Cook, stirring frequently, until the liquid reaches about 260 degrees. It should form a definite but pliable ball when inserted into cold water.

Remove the popcorn and peanuts from the oven. Quickly but gently pour the caramel mixture over them and stir. Return the pan to the oven.

Cook for 45 minutes, stirring every 15 minutes and making sure that all of the solid material is covered with the coating. If it starts to stick to the pan earlier, remove it from the oven; you're aiming for Cracker Jack, not peanut/popcorn brittle!

When you remove the pan from the oven, transfer the Cracker Jack to sheets covered with waxed paper to cool. Store in an airtight container.

Makes about 2 quarts of candy-coated popcorn with peanuts. Don't forget to add a prize or two!