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...is Popcorn the healthiest snack?!

# King Corn

munch on it guilt-free!

**W**atching a movie is incomplete without popcorn. It is probably the most ubiquitous food found around the world irrespective of language, culture and geography. Half the fun of watching a movie in theater is eating a tub of popcorn. Considering the quality of movies releasing these days, that just might be the only reason which could get you through three hours of boredom. But in this health and calorie conscious age, we many times wonder and debate if popcorn is a healthy snack? As if sitting through a torturous movie was not bad enough, you may leave the movie hall with a sense of guilt that you gulped a tub full of popcorn with lots of calories. Let us shed some light in this article on the nutritional value of popcorn and which popcorn to eat and which to avoid.

Corn has this unique quality to puff up as compared to the other grains. Outer hull of corn kernel is impervious to moisture and the starch present inside is hard and dense. Hence, when corn is heated, pressure builds up inside the kernel, until explosive "pop" results resulting into POPCORN.

**Nutritional value of air popped popcorn with no additives per 100 Gms is given below.**

Energy	382 kcal
Carbohydrates	78 gm
Dietary fiber	15 gm
Fat	4 gm
Protein	12 gm
Thiamin – Vitamin B <sub>1</sub>	0.2 mg
Riboflavin – Vitamin B <sub>2</sub>	0.3 mg
Iron	2.7 mg

Source: USDA Nutrient Database



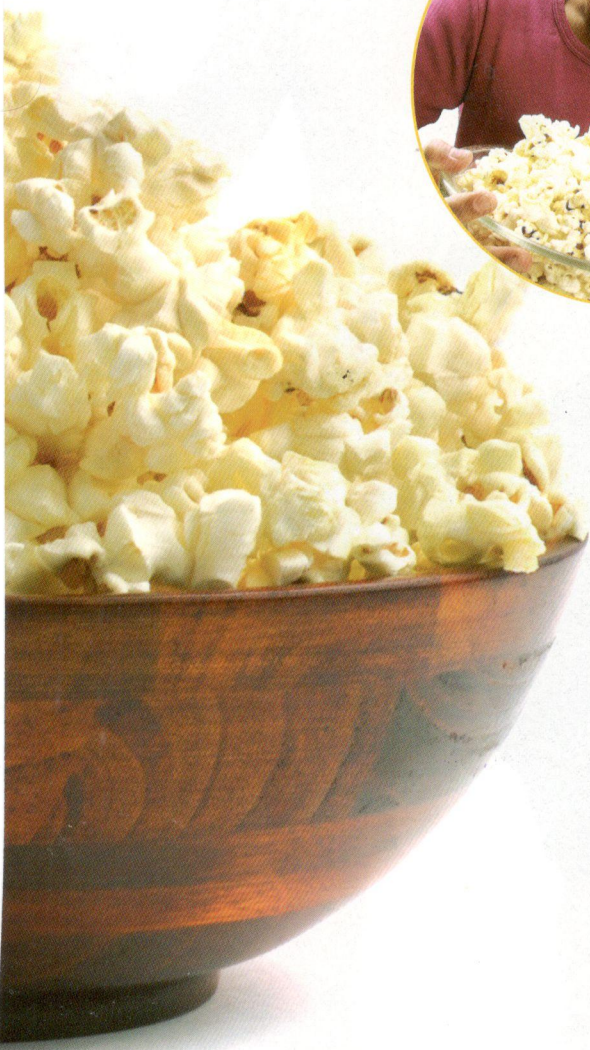
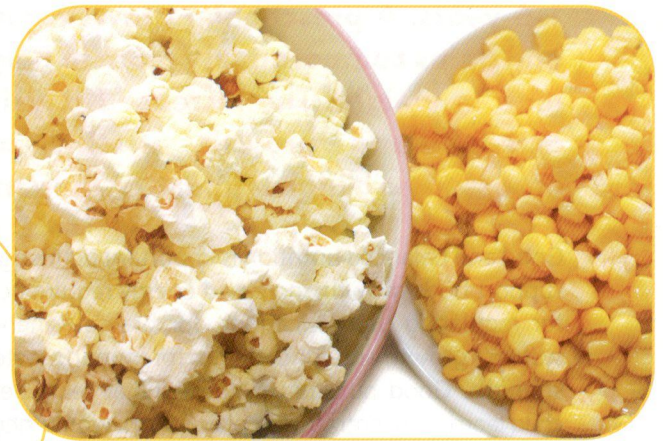
Popcorn is high in fiber, low in calories, fat and sodium. It is a good snack option for people with dietary restrictions on the intake of calories, fat, and/or sodium. For the sake of flavor, however, large amounts of fat (butter), sugar (caramel), and sodium (seasoning) are often added to prepared popcorn, which can quickly convert it to a very poor choice for those on restricted diets. The kernel is very rich in vitamin B complex, vitamin E, protein, iron and phosphorus. It also contains thiamine (1/5 of the daily dose of thiamine can be met with 3 ounce of popcorn, isn't that amazing!) and riboflavin. Popcorn has more phosphorous as compared to potato chips. The protein content of popcorn is also more as compared to other cereal grains.

## Popped v/s Unpopped Corn

While comparing 1 cup of popped corn and 1 cup of unpopped corn, Unpopped corn has more calorie content. This is simply because 1 cup of popped corn has less number of kernels as compared to the unpopped corn. 1 cup of unpopped corn is equal to 4 cups of popped corn. However, addition of butter and sugar to popped corn increases the calorie content making it unhealthy.

## Popcorn Calories per cup:

1. Cheese popcorn - 58
2. Buttered popcorn - 40
3. Oil popped popcorn - 55
4. Air popped or salted popcorn - 31
5. Microwave popcorn - 25
6. Caramel popcorn - 122.5
7. Caramel popcorn with peanuts- 230



I am sure looking at the calorie chart; it is not difficult to know the best option. However, you can choose to have a mixture of various types of popcorns, with plain or salted forming about 75% of the mixture. With this you can balance taste and fun with good health. You can always be creative and conscious about the food you eat so that you can choose the healthy option without compromising too much on taste.

## Health risks

Popcorn is not recommended for children under four because of the risk of choking. Microwaveable popcorn is designed to be cooked along with its various flavoring agents. Few of the common flavoring agents are artificial butter, salted flavorings & di-acetyl, which has been implicated in causing respiratory ailments.

## Health Benefits

Popcorn is the healthiest snack as it is a whole grain cereal with high fiber content. Popcorn contains good fat without any cholesterol. Also, plain popcorn has one of the least amounts of fat as compared to other snacks. So, munch on it guilt-free!