

Popcorn

By Andrew F. Smith



Popcorn balls were among the most popular confections in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Although references appeared as early as the 1840s, the first recipe seems not to have been published until 1861 by the New York cookbook author E. F. Haskell in her *Housekeeper's Encyclopedia*. Her recipe was simple: "Boil honey, maple, or other sugar to the great thread; pop corn and stick the corn together in balls with the candy." In the home, making popcorn balls was usually the province of girls and women. The recipe below comes from England:

Pop-Corn Balls:

Roast the corn berries over a smokeless fire in a corn-popper; keep shaking until every berry has burst; boil sufficient sugar and water to the degree of feather, 245o; add to each 7-lbs. of syrup, four ounces of dissolved gum arabic; wet the popped corn in this syrup, and roll them in fin pulverized sugar until coated all over, then lay them aside; when dry, repeat the coating process in the same manner until they have taken desired thickness of sugar. Weigh or measure sufficient coated berries, according to size of ball required; moisten them with thin syrup, partly from the ball by hand, then put it into a squeezer (something like a lemon squeezer), and press tightly into shape. N.B.--The corn berries may be coated in a comfit pan like other seeds or almonds, then form into balls in the usual way.

Source: E. Skuse. *Skuse's Complete Confectioner: A Practical Guide to the Art of Sugar Boiling in All Its Branches*. London: W. J. Bush & Co., Ltd., [1890]. 53.

Editor's Note: For more information on popcorn, see Andrew F. Smith, *Popped Culture: A Social History of Popcorn in America*, University of South Carolina Press (1999).