

Pecan Caramel Popcorn Balls

I'm not a big fan of traditional popcorn balls – too sweet for me, and too difficult to eat. But caramel corn in a portion-sized ball, so that I can control myself? I'm all over that. These popcorn balls are based on a loopy-goosy caramel sauce, and you need to keep them in the refrigerator, or they will fall apart.

6 cups popped popcorn (about a cup, un-popped)
2 tablespoons cinnamon
4 tablespoons butter
½ cup sugar
4 tablespoons organic corn starch
½ cup milk
1 teaspoon vanilla
1 cup toasted finally chopped pecans

Like a large baking sheet with parchment paper.

In a large bowl, sprinkle the popcorn with the cinnamon.

Melt the butter, together with the sugar and the cornstarch over medium high heat, stirring continually. When the mixture changes color from white to darkish brown, add the milk, and stir until it comes to a boil, and you are happy with the consistency and color.

Remove from the heat, stir in the vanilla and the pecans. Pour the caramel over the cinnamon popcorn. Stir and toss with a spatula, coating as much of the popcorn as you can.

Here's the only tricky part of this process. When you think the caramel is cool, but still pliable, use your hands to form it into balls, approximately 2 to 3 inches in diameter. Don't let a kid do this, and be VERY careful. Sugar holds heat like nothing else, and there may be hot spots in your batch of caramel corn. You can dunk your hands in ice water before you start – it helps keep the caramel from sticking to your skin, but it won't keep you from getting burnt. You must be CAREFUL.

If you'd rather skip the potential for burns, just let the corn cool in the bowl and eat it (wait at least an hour)– it still tastes great.

Place the popcorn balls on the parchment paper, and refrigerate for few hours so that the balls will hold their shape. The candy will keep for a couple of days, but it tastes best on the day you make it.