



ANSON MILLS

Kick-Ass Caramel Corn

Yield

Makes about 3 quarts

Time

About 1½ hours start to finish

Cooking Remarks

Get your hands on some top-notch red-skinned Virginia peanuts. We ordered ours online, and we especially liked the large size and deep roastiness of the red-skinned peanuts from The Peanut Shop of Williamsburg.

For the richest, most caramely flavor, procure some grade A dark amber or grade B maple syrup, if you don't already have a jug in your fridge or pantry. It's well worth seeking out. Your pancakes and waffles will thank you, too!

Equipment Mise en Place

For this recipe, you will need a digital kitchen scale, a 4-quart or larger heavy-bottomed saucepan, a splatter screen, a very large heatproof bowl, a heavy-bottomed small saucepan, a digital instant-read thermometer, a silicone spatula, a rimmed baking sheet, and a wire rack.

Ingredients

1 tablespoon peanut oil, plus additional for greasing the baking sheet
4 ounces Anson Mills Appalachian Heirloom Sweet Flint Popping Corn
5 ounces roasted, salted red-skinned Virginia peanuts
2.5 ounces European-style unsalted butter, cut into 3 or 4 pieces
3 ounces dark brown sugar
2.5 ounces light corn syrup
2 ounces grade A dark amber or grade B maple syrup
3/8 teaspoon fine sea salt
1/2 teaspoon baking soda
1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Directions

1. In a 4-quart or larger heavy-bottomed saucepan, heat the oil over medium-high heat until shimmering. Add the popcorn and stir quickly to coat the kernels with oil. Cover with a splatter screen and cook until the kernels begin to pop. Once they do, occasionally shake the pan, holding the splatter screen in place. When the popping slows to 3 to 4 seconds between bursts, turn off the heat, then empty the popcorn into a very large heatproof bowl. Remove and discard as many of the unpopped kernels as you can, but be careful, as they're HOT! Add the peanuts to the bowl and stir to combine (the peanuts will fall to the bottom).

2. Adjust an oven rack to the middle position and heat the oven to 250 degrees. Lightly grease a rimmed baking sheet with peanut oil.

3. In a small heavy-bottomed saucepan, combine the butter, brown sugar, corn syrup, maple syrup, and salt. Set the pan over medium heat and cook, stirring frequently with a silicone spatula, until the butter melts. Turn up the heat to medium-high and continue to cook, stirring occasionally now, until the mixture registers about 250 degrees on a digital instant-read thermometer, about 4 minutes; the syrup will be foamy so make sure you get a reading near but not directly against the bottom of the pot. Remove the pot from the heat and immediately add the baking soda and the vanilla and stir to combine. Working quickly, drizzle about half of the caramel over the popcorn and fold just once or twice with the spatula, then drizzle in the remaining caramel. Fold until the popcorn is well coated; work quickly because as the caramel cools, it stiffens, and it becomes increasingly difficult to coat the popcorn. But don't fret too much if the popcorn isn't perfectly coated.

4. Turn the popcorn onto the prepared baking sheet and distribute it in an even layer. Bake for 45 minutes to 1 hour, stirring to get the once-again molten syrup to coat the popcorn and redistributing into an even layer every 15 minutes. Let cool on a wire rack for about 20 minutes, then break apart the clumps with your hands. Let cool completely, then devour or store in an airtight container for up to 1 week (it will be consumed sooner than that!).