



## ANSON MILLS

### County Fair Kettle Corn

#### Yield

About 5 quarts

#### Time

About 15 minutes

#### Introduction

We wanted to debut Anson Mills' exceptional heirloom popping corn with a stunning recipe—something a little sweet and a touch buttery. Caramel corn is fun, but rather too lacquered for our delicate flint. We savor a fine popcorn ball as much as any girl, but miss the pleasures of “stab, grab, and toss,” or the repetitive hand-to-mouth motions demanded by popped kernels in a bowl.

Kettle corn! With its buttery undercoat and sugar-crisp glaze, kettle corn is one class act—its high-jinks carny name notwithstanding. At the fair, amid clouds of steam and crazy-rich aromas, we've seen brave guys with giant paddles move dancing corn around and around in a metal box. We've eaten the popped kernels straight from the hopper—slightly salty, not too sweet, crisp, and tailored: perfect! We had no clue whatsoever how to make it ourselves at home.

We started with butter—clarified butter, so it wouldn't burn—and a touch of high-octane grapeseed oil for company. The beauty of popping corn in butter rather than dousing butter post-pop is undeniable. The butter envelopes the kernels and manages to get itself under their skins. Getting the sugar right was another story. And we erred in the weight department—not the weight of sugar, but the weight of the pot, er, kettle. We were going for broke with a heavy-handed Le Creuset Dutch oven, trying to emulate the guys with the paddles at the fair. But forget trying to shake up a Le Creuset to keep the kernels moving. Too heavy! The gathering storm of heat driven by the kettle's cast-iron core was also turning the sugar to caramel despite our best efforts—and we had an alarmingly high number of unpopped kernels, to boot.

At that point some fresh, unrelated crisis intervened, and we turned this recipe over to Dawn Yanagihara, site genie and fellow popcorn fanatic. Dawn tweaked the recipe to within an inch of its life. It got a lighter kettle (an All-Clad Dutch oven), a splatter screen, a mad dash around the kettle pursued by a wooden spoon, and a shake-a-shake hula action for even coating and popping. The recipe also got its sugar at just the right time—about 15 seconds in—and plenty of on-the-spot vigilance.

The results: a crisp, separate-kernel sugar glaze, buttery-rich flavor, and a compulsive movement of your hand back and forth to the bowl.

Practice really does make perfect with this recipe.

### **Equipment Mise en Place**

For this recipe, you will need a small saucepan; a soup spoon; a small bowl; a heavy-bottomed (but, ideally, *not* cast iron) 6- to 8-quart Dutch oven; a splatter screen; a wooden spoon; two potholders or oven mitts; and a large serving bowl.

### **Ingredients**

3 ounces (6 tablespoons) unsalted European-style butter  
2 tablespoons grapeseed oil or avocado oil  
4 ounces (1/2 cup) Anson Mills Appalachian Heirloom Sweet Flint Popping Corn  
1.75 ounces (1/4 cup) sugar  
1/4 teaspoon fine sea salt

### **Directions**

- 1.** Melt the butter in a small saucepan over low heat. Remove the pan from the heat, tilt it gently, and, using a soup spoon, skim off and discard the foam from the surface. Spoon the clear yellow butterfat into a small bowl; discard the water and milk solids left in the pan.
- 2.** Measure 3 tablespoons of the clarified butter into a heavy-bottomed (preferably *not* cast iron) 6- to 8-quart Dutch oven. (You will have some leftover clarified butter; stored in an airtight container in the refrigerator, it will keep for months.) Add the oil to the pot and set the pot over high heat. Allow the fat to heat for a minute or two, toss in a few kernels of popcorn, and cover the pot with the splatter screen.
- 3.** When the kernels begin to pop, add the remaining popcorn, stir quickly with a wooden spoon, and then put the splatter screen back in place. Cook, vigorously shaking the pot a couple times, until the kernels begin to pop. Working quickly, slide the splatter screen off just a bit and quickly pour in the sugar. Replace the splatter screen, sneak the wooden spoon into the pot, and stir to distribute the sugar. Replace the splatter screen and cook, frequently jostling the corn by using two potholders or oven mitts to grasp the pot handles and very vigorously shaking the pot. When the popping ceases, remove the pot from the heat. Transfer the popcorn to a large serving bowl, sprinkle one-half of the salt over, and toss with the wooden spoon. Sprinkle with the remaining salt and toss again. Let cool for a minute and serve.