

POPCORN: Big Business in the Balcony



The word that popcorn manufacturers were increasing their acreage 10% over last year spotlighted popcorn's growing role in U. S. movie houses. Substantial selling of popcorn in theaters began around 1940, as a result of a wartime shortage of candy.

By 1952, movie houses accounted for about one-third of the nation's annual \$350 million retail popcorn sales. Movie fans could munch on buttered, cheese-flavored or caramel popcorn, with banana, licorice, cinnamon, wintergreen, orange, and lemon-flavored popcorn on the way.

Popcorn's Silent Profits

Theater-owners resent implications that popcorn is keeping their movie houses alive, point out that a theater grossing \$60,000 a year in admissions may net only \$3,000 on popcorn. "However," admits one theaterman, "it is a nice piece of change, and it can sometimes be the difference between a slight loss and a profit." Despite this difference, however, a few movie houses still resist the popcorn craze, fearing to offend some of their patrons. It was to soothe these patrons' easily bedeviled ears that the noiseless popcorn bag was developed in 1949. And now researchers from the National Assn. of Popcorn Manufacturers have proven by actual test that it is possible to eat popcorn without making a racket.

The researchers ate their popcorn in darkened theaters, later asked other patrons if they had heard any popcorn-crunching noises. They had not. The trick, explained the researchers, is to eat the popcorn with your mouth tightly closed.

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