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Old Pop, New Shop

Patty's Old Fashioned Popcorn will make you feel like a kid in a candy store.

Ben Liebing

Partners Pat Atkinson and Randy Sloan claim to be in retirement. But instead of hitting the golf course, they decided to make popcorn. "There was a small popcorn shop in my hometown in Utah, and my father somehow got ahold of their recipe," says Sloan. "On Sundays, when he was off work, he'd be in the kitchen making popcorn." Sloan loved it so much, he briefly ran his own popcorn store in Utah.

As they neared retirement, Atkinson decided to nudge Sloan back into the business. "I knew that [Randy] had the know-how," says Atkinson. "So I said, *Let's do it.*" Last December, the two opened Patty's Old Fashioned Popcorn in a white-washed building on Michigan Avenue near Hyde Park Square.

Patty's popcorn isn't like the microwave stuff. They use an open flame cooker to produce five gallons of popcorn at a time. Take the caramel corn, for example. Sloan starts with mushroom-style popcorn, used for caramel coating because of its rounded shape and sturdiness. Once popped, he slides it into the barrel of homemade caramel and adds butter. "Sugar caramelizes when it heats," says Sloan as he stirs. "I've found that letting it smoke three times—not quite letting it burn—gives it that perfect sweetness."

Patty's also sells a vast array of other sweets. "We wanted it to be like the candy counters of stores you'd see in the 1930s," says Sloan. But nothing can match their popcorn. From kettle and cheese to Cookies and Cream (made with bits of Oreo) Patty's is able to please even the sweetest tooth.

Patty's Old Fashioned Popcorn
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*Photograph by Jonathan Willis
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