

## People Pop in From All Around for Garrett Popcorn



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The Sears Tower, Wrigley Field, Navy Pier and ... Garrett popcorn shops? It seems that Garrett popcorn shops are becoming one of Chicago's great tourist attractions and a Chicago staple.

Passing by the popcorn shop on Michigan Avenue and not stopping in is impossible. One whiff of the sweet-smelling caramel popcorn and you'll be buying a big bag. Just from interviewing customers coming out of the shop, one realizes that Garrett's popcorn shops aren't just Chicago's secret any more.

Out of 10 people interviewed, eight of them were from out of town. More surprising was the fact that all of these tourists had heard about the popcorn shop back at home.

A couple from Dallas, Texas, said there's buzz about the popcorn shops over at home and that they never pass up the opportunity to get some of Garrett Co.'s trademark CaramelCrisp popcorn when they visit Chicago.

Another customer from Ohio was drawn by the stories of long lines to the popcorn shop. She figured that it must be something good if Chicagoans are willing to wait in enormous lines just for some popcorn. After tasting Garrett's signature product, she explained, "It was worth the wait."

So, what's so great about Garrett's popcorn? Most would say its quality, or perhaps the fact that the recipe has never changed. With caramel, cheese and plain popcorn, there's something for almost everyone. The shops' bestseller is a mix of their trademark CaramelCrisp popcorn and their Cheesecorn. It's aptly named the Downtown Mix.

The original shop was built in 1949 at 10 West Madison St. The successful shop then grew to five locations in downtown Chicago. They are currently located at 26 East Randolph St., 2 West Jackson St., 18 East Adams St. and 670 North Michigan Ave.

The founders, Mr. and Mrs. Garrett, opened the shop and have passed the franchise on from generation to generation. It is a family-owned business that has withstood the test of time. It currently is maintained by the third generation of the original Garretts.

Over 52 years, the success of the shops has been steadily growing, as has its popularity. Because of the high demand of the popcorn, a Web site was launched at [garrettpopcorn.com](http://garrettpopcorn.com) where customers can mail-order the popcorn and have it sent all over the U.S.

Some customers said they were glad to hear that such a small franchise became so successful. A patron from Orlando, Fla., was amazed that a popcorn shop could survive among the expensive shops on Michigan Avenue. However, that was before she tasted the popcorn. "Now I understand why," she said after trying some CaramelCrisp.

In 1999, Garrett popcorn shops celebrated their 50th anniversary. Mayor Daley even sanctioned

an official Garrett Popcorn Shop Day on June 2, 1999. It just goes to show how far a small, yet successful business can go, even to the point of reaching a cultural icon status.