



Barker's Grub : Easy, Wholesome Home-Cooking for Dogs

By Rudy Edalati

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Canine Cooking That Will Have Them Begging for More

Which do you think your dog would prefer: dry kibble, mushy canned food, or a nice, nutritionally sound helping of Tuna Togetherness? Not surprisingly, most dogs would be happier -- and healthier -- with the latter, considering the dangerous preservatives, questionable ingredients, and mysterious flavoring agents often used in commercial dog food.

That's why Rudy Edalati cooked up **Barker's Grub**, a cookbook filled with wholesome, easy-to-prepare meals for your mutt or your pedigreed pooch -- and you'll find all the necessary ingredients in your fridge or at the local supermarket. She includes not only fun everyday meals, but healing meals for specific health problems, as well as special diets for different life stages, such as:

- * Lo Mein Barking Style: the doggie alternative for Chinese takeout
- * Beef Puppy Food: just the right mix for a growing dog
- * Davie's Juicy Jiggly-Wiggly Anemia Diet: a blood-boosting dish of liver, rice, and spinach

Barker's Grub is informative (there's lots of canine nutritional information to chew on), inspiring, and just plain fun. The recipes are simple and quick -- after all, it's not just about health and longevity, it's about making the most of the time you and your dog spend together.

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Editorial Review

From the Inside Flap

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About the Author

Rudy Edalati is the owner of a popular dog food catering business, also called Barker's Grub, in Cabin John, Maryland.

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Why I Began to Cook for Dogs

There is so much confusion today about what to feed dogs. Pet food can be as tricky a subject as human food--there seem to be so many dos and don'ts. Most of us would love to believe that science has evolved to the point where every nutritional question has been answered, that experts have done the work for us, and that we can purchase health and well-being in a can or bag. I am sorry to report, it simply is not so. Most veterinarians, with the exception of holistic veterinarians, study only a few hours on the topic of nutrition in veterinary school. There are very few veterinary nutritionists out there--forty-four in the entire United States at the time of this book's publication. Those who have explored the topic of canine nutrition advocate home cooking, but you're pretty much on your own to figure out the appropriate ingredients and quantities. So, where can we turn for practical advice? We dog lovers must rely largely on common sense.

My goal in this book is to simplify the subject of dog nutrition and make feeding your four-legged companions an occasion of daily joy and satisfaction. I have spent the past five years building a dog food catering business called Barker's Grub, in the greater Washington, DC, and suburban Maryland area, with that one aim in mind. Like you, I love, respect, and live with animals--currently four dogs and five cats. And I believe there should be no mystery in good, wholesome meals for dogs. Since establishing my business, I have worked closely with several local holistic veterinarians and their canine patients, both as a preventive and as a restorative health measure. Still the greatest reward I have found in my work is the enormous pleasure dogs take in eating the recipes I am sharing with you here.

My eyes were opened to the power of home cooking for my dogs through an intense personal experience.

When I first decided to adopt a dog, I became very excited. I had grown up around animals; we had dogs and cats at home and I worked for years with horses in a stable. The only difference was that this puppy would be my complete responsibility. Because I wanted to do everything right, I did homework on dog-proofing the house and finding a knowledgeable veterinarian. In addition, I educated myself on other basics of responsible pet ownership, such as spay/neuter programs, licenses, and vaccines. Then I went to the pound and rescued a mixed-breed puppy that caught my eye and named her Hannah. It was love at first sight.

After the puppy got her shots, the veterinarian sent me home with a supply of pricey brand-name dog food. That should have been the end of this story: "They lived happily ever after!" But there were many problems ahead of us.

Not long after I adopted my dog Hannah, I noticed that her coat was dull and getting worse, and she was emitting a weird body odor. Initially, I attributed Hannah's poor coat and odor to bad grooming, a lack of proper nutrition in the shelter, and just not getting the attention she had needed while she was in the pound. I tried bathing her with expensive shampoos I purchased from the vet, but no amount of washing seemed to remedy the problem. More frustrating still was that even after performing a skin scrape test, the vet couldn't pinpoint the source and reason behind Hannah's foul smell.

Finally, one evening, I noticed Hannah wasn't feeling too good--she didn't seem her normal playful self. She started losing her equilibrium an hour or so later, and her pupils became dilated. Minutes after, she began vomiting violently. I immediately rushed her to the local emergency animal hospital, where she was put under observation for what seemed like hours. After some tests, the attending veterinarian told me Hannah had some sort of "toxicity," but couldn't give me a straight answer as to what had caused "toxins" to accumulate in her body. Needless to say, I was dumbfounded.

The next day I took Hannah home and at the vet's suggestion put her on a bland diet of chicken and white rice. He told me that if all went well, after a week she could go back on her regular food. I called my mom for her advice, because I could remember her feeding special dishes to our pets when I was a kid, and she gave me a couple of simple recipe ideas. Ten days later, Hannah seemed well, and life in our household went back to the way things were before; I took my dog off homemade food and put her back on her specially formulated commercial diet.

A couple of days later the same type of episode recurred. Back to the vet we went. This time, because of my experiment with home cooking--and because I had watched Hannah closely in the intervening period to make sure she wasn't getting into cleaning products or ingesting other unnatural substances--it was more obvious that the toxins came from something she was eating in her regular diet. After carefully watching Hannah over the next few days, I noticed nothing remarkable about her food intake. It was just the highly recommended dog food I bought at the veterinary clinic. Eventually, I put two and two together and realized that it had to be the commercial food I was giving her that was causing the problem.

Bewildered and in shock, I couldn't believe that this so-called scientifically formulated brand of pet food was the source of my agony, not to mention the tremendous harm it had brought on my beloved Hannah. I had unwittingly put my trust in processed pet food, and I felt like a complete idiot. The question kept passing through my mind, "How could I have been so out of tune with my dog's needs and my own basic instincts?" That day I lost my blind faith in science and in commercial pet food. I realized that vets aren't gods. They are human beings; and just like everyone else, they aren't perfect and all knowing.

More significantly, as a result of Hannah's crisis, I began to question what pet food really is. Who makes it? What are the ingredients? Does it come from the moon? Does it have magical power? The answers I found

made a resounding NO. Pet food is generally processed scraps and meat and other human-food-industry by-products doused with loads of preservatives and cooked at extremely high temperatures. Then why was that vet so eager to push this stuff on me? The answer was that he didn't know any better. (Plus, it probably didn't hurt his pocketbook to promote such products.)

As a result of my outrage and concern, I found I had a burning desire to learn as much as I could about my dog's health and well-being as it related to food. Thus I began an intense search for the truth about various ingredients. I took the knowledge I had picked up by reading on the subject and started cooking for Hannah. I originally worried that it would be an arduous chore, but it didn't take as much time as I thought it would to whip up a batch each week. Much to my surprise I also found I enjoyed cooking for her immensely. In fact, I loved it! And mostly I loved it because of the health and joy it brought my Hannah.

To make a long story short, I've been cooking for animals ever since. Yes, me, a person who once dreaded cooking for myself, let alone anyone else. In fact, Hannah and I started eating right together, and I discovered true joy in making my sweet dog happy. Within a couple of years I adopted two more dogs and three cats. Nowadays, the animal population in my house goes up and down according to what rescued dog or cat needs fostering at any given moment. Knowing that my pets are receiving the best nutrition from a complete and balanced meal gives me pleasure, and I am satisfied because I know I am doing the right thing for them.

When my friends and family learned how well my dogs were thriving on my homemade food, they came around for lessons and supplies. Soon I was giving away huge quantities every week. Finally, I asked myself, "Why not cook for dogs as a business?" I opened Barker's Grub (named by my brilliant brother) with a handful of customers. To drum up more business, I contacted a couple of local holistic veterinarians and presented my ideas in long conversations. Dr. Monique Maniet immediately took a chance on me. She began sending me clients whose dogs had specific ailments. Word of mouth spread, and other vets soon contacted me. In these five years, I have met many wonderful and caring veterinarians who emanate such an amazingly positive energy and interest in nutrition that I feel a great sense of hope for the direction animal medicine is moving.

My grandmother Rohannie had age-old knowledge about food and nutrition that she passed on to my mother, starting when my mother was pregnant with me. She taught my mother that proper nutrition would form the fetus physically and mentally, preparing it for life, and she made a point of eating well, drinking good water, and surrounding herself with beautiful flowers and artwork. She taught us that your body reacts chemically through the emotions to these things in the environment. I have tried my best to incorporate all those elements into the philosophy and structure of this book.

Holistic Pet Care: Complementary Medicine for Dogs

Holistic veterinary medicine is an idea whose time has definitely come. In recent years, we in America have rediscovered--and begun to accept into the mainstream--the principles of holistic health care and sound nutrition for human beings. Why not for animals? In fact, you can find practitioners of this growing veterinary specialization in every region of the country.

Over the years, I have seen and learned about numerous cases of dogs whose conditions have been successfully treated by nontraditional therapies. Dogs respond well to acupuncture, chiropractic care, and homeopathy. Combined with sound nutritional principles, holistic veterinary care is amazingly effective, but you have to be patient and willing to work with the veterinarian, and not give up if you do not see results overnight. Holistic medicine is not attempting to cure isolated symptoms; it is centered on bringing the whole

body into a balanced state of optimal well-being. This is a lifelong enterprise. And the holistic veterinarians with whom I have spoken uniformly believe that proper nutrition is essential to promote good health.

Veterinarian Michael W. Fox, syndicated columnist, and author of *Understanding Your Dog*, is a strong advocate of homemade diets and whole foods. When he is at the dog park with his three dogs, people have been known to stop him and remark, "Your dogs shine." If they want to know how he keeps his dogs so vibrant, Fox, who cooks for his dogs, tells them, "Use natural food ingredients and flaxseed oil. I was told many years ago as a child in England that these were the best things to make a dog strong and for it to have a good coat."

When a holistic veterinarian is working to make a diagnosis of a dog's condition, in addition to the physical and behavioral symptoms that indicate an underlying problem, he or she takes into account the dog's family history, genetic background and breed susceptibility, vaccination history, and dietary regimen. Because the dog's genetic makeup obviously cannot be changed, the holistic vet assesses the vaccination protocols and modifies its diet, putting a dog on special homemade foods and supplements formulated to deal with its specific diagnosed condition, such as kidney disease, allergies, arthritis, or congestive heart failure. Additionally, the vet may prescribe homeopathic remedies, herbs, and chiropractic or acupuncture sessions to alleviate symptoms--even drugs and surgery when indicated.

There is nothing like a good veterinarian, one who cares about your dog almost as much as you do. Most veterinarians truly love and respect animals. This health-care provider is someone with whom you need to be able to exchange ideas, who is willing to discuss alternative therapies and new forms of medicine, and who places consideration of the dog above all other things, including generating his or her own income.

How can you know which veterinarian is the right one for your dog? There are a number of legitimate considerations including degrees, certification and experience, and membership in peer organizations, as well as general broad-mindedness and likability. Be prepared to ask your veterinarian his or her ideas about your dog's nutritional requirements and food sources. Does the vet advocate fresh food versus processed food? Does he or she have views about supplementation? You need to be satisfied with the answers.

Last year, the fourteen-year-old mixed-breed dog of one of my neighbors was put on steroids and cortisone in order to treat its serious case of arthritis. I was very concerned about possible side effects from the level of drugs in the dog's system and suggested the man look into an alternative solution for his dog. Cortisone causes the bones to become frail and brittle, even while it is working to offset inflammation and pain. In the long run it can actually do more damage than help for an older dog.

My neighbor found a new vet who took his dog off steroids and put it on B12 injections instead to reduce the inflammation. He decided to add yucca and cartilage supplements to the dog's food. Soon his dog was walking around wonderfully, without much pain and stiffness. The last time I spoke with him he told me, "If I had only known earlier, I could have saved my dog a lot of discomfort."

My client's first veterinarian had not been open-minded enough to investigate natural supplements and vitamin therapy. But if the second veterinarian knew this treatment, why couldn't the first vet learn it or find out?

Nutrition is a component of treatment for the vast majority of physical conditions and ailments your dog will face during its lifetime, and holistic veterinary care is the context for the return to the natural, whole-food diet that I advocate. Simply put, the basic idea is to prevent disease by not contributing to it in the first place.

The good news is that you can learn to promote your dog's health through homemade meals that may easily be prepared in your own kitchen. The recipes I cook at Barker's Grub that are found in this book are derived from my old family recipes and my imagination. It is written for you, the reader, who wishes to give your beloved dogs the absolute best possible care and ensure them health and happiness. The feeding instructions are straightforward and based on sound nutritional principles and practices. I hope it inspires you to take action.

Users Review

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