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Cuisine *de* Critters

By Phil Tripp



It looks like it'll be a long hot summer and for those torrid Dog Days (and Cat Daze too), we thought it might be fun to get out the recipes for cooling treats. With the great pet treat companies that we have the luxury of in Sydney, I'm amazed we haven't seen a new business that caters to pets with frozen treats for the summer—I'd call it Chilly Dawgs if I had it and the treats I'd dish out would be paw-lickin' good!

Since there aren't any Polar Pup or Feline Gelato shops and you'd want to make the healthiest, low sugar treat you could, a couple of pieces of advice first before you whip out the blender, food processor or ice cream maker.

It's best to use honey in limited amounts and not to use white sugar. Being a diabetic myself, I'm sensitive to this problem in people as well as dogs and even parrots. There is a wonderful alternative to sugar that does not produce a rise in blood sugar but is not an artificial sweetener either like Equal or Sweet and Low. It's called Splenda, it's made from sugar but has been altered so it doesn't react in the body like sugar, and it tastes like sugar without a chemical flavour. A Cuisine de Critter tip: it can be used in baking too and doesn't break down like artificial sweeteners.

There's no real harm with normal dogs giving them limited amounts of milk, but to be on the safe side, you can use unsalted soy milk if you'd prefer not to use regular milk and you can also use soy yoghurt instead of dairy products. They freeze just as well. And if you are using dairy, it's not going to hurt to keep the calories down by using skim or no fat products.

Since you're making treats and appealing to the gourmand pet—either cat or dog—this is the time you can get away with some sneaky health strategies. There's nothing to stop you from using ground carrot, apple or other healthy fruit and vegetable additives which can be blended in to the mix. We highly recommend banana because it's a delicious thickener and also has potassium and vitamins. For cats (perish the thought!) drop in a sardine or two.

But don't use chocolate, grapes, or macadamia nuts as these can be harmful. Onions aren't good for dogs either, but it's not the sort of ingredient you equate with ice cream! I personally use garlic in everything, but some vets don't recommend it. Same with avocado. If you want to give that chocolate like flavour which dogs crave, feel free to substitute carob which is harmless.

My suggestion for a sneaky healthy additive is spirulina, which is an algae that is highly nutritional. You don't want to give pets human vitamins, but this is the sort of treat that pet vitamin powders, glucosamine and chondroitin formulas can be added in for older dogs with stiffening joints. You can also blend in green vegetables or root vegies like cooked sweet potato or pumpkin.

Your treat can be as simple as taking an ice cube tray, filling each slot with only one third water, freezing it, then spooning in a gob of crunchy peanut butter in the middle and covering with water to freeze again. A frozen Pup A Chup! Peanut butter encased in ice. YUM!

Who says the ice has to be water? Vary it with stock. Maybe cut cubes of raw meat and drop them in the icy stock to freeze into cubes. This is for totally simple preparation. I'd call them Chunky Pup Chups.

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An Urban Animal Community Announcement

Lilly and all the folk at Urban Animal would like to remind you that at this time of year it's raining cats and dogs (kittens and puppies) at pounds and shelters throughout Sydney.

We wish you a happy and safe 2008 and ask that if you don't have room for rescued pet then please make a small donation to one of the many worthy rescue facilities. In a small way you can help the Lillys of this world find a stable and loving home.



Photo by Animax

Ready to get that blender out? Here's a five minute recipe that is easily made up. For freezing and storage, those small round takeaway plastic containers with lids that hold the treat without dripping if filled halfway and can be used on their own. Or you can use paper cups, plastic cups or ice cream molds covering with plastic wrap and a rubber band when freezing to pop into a dog bowl when ready. Just remember that freezing expands food so don't fill them. Three quarters is enough and the cups are reusable if cleaned thoroughly.

In a pinch, you can use Tupperware or freezer safe trays to spread the mixture in and cut into squares for storage in zip lock bags. Or quarter fill zip lock bags, roll out the air and freeze.

Pupsicles

Here's a no brainer. 1 whole ripe banana, three strawberries, two teaspoons honey and a tablespoon peanut butter. Blend. Pop into ice cube tray or small paper cups covered with plastic wrap and freeze.

Ice Dream Sandwiches

Use a Teflon coated cupcake or muffin tin. Spray lightly with oil or lightly coat. Take some dog biscuits (or dried out whole grain bread) and grind up in a blender or on a bench into crunchy granules. Put about 1 cm of these in each cup and tamp down lightly.

Prepare the filling

2 frozen ripe bananas

1 apple deseeded and shredded in a food processor or add a shredded carrot

2 cups frozen unsweetened yoghurt

2 tablespoons honey

2 tablespoons crunchy peanut butter

Blend bananas, yoghurt, honey and peanut butter together and fold in shredded apples or carrots. Mix lightly and drop frozen mixture onto each piece of dog biscuit to 2-3 cms. Flatten with bottom of glass, add another cm of ground dog biscuit, press in to make a sandwich, cover with plastic wrap and freeze or use ziplocks.

Sor-Bay At The Moon!

Four cups of yoghurt either plain or unflavoured, 1 jar of fruity baby food or container of unsweetened fruit in its own juice, two tablespoons of honey if yoghurt is unflavoured and two tablespoons of crunchy peanut butter. Use a blender or food processor to make into a puree and freeze. Here's a trick for doing that. Use a wide glass, line with a piece of plastic wrap on the inside but going over the edges, pour 1/4 full, stick another piece of plastic wrap over that and go over the edge, fill 1/4 full again, add another piece of plastic wrap, fill 1/4 full again and cover with plastic wrap. When frozen, you have four easy to remove discs of a fruity sorbet.

And have you thought of the idea of a frozen gravy treat? You could easily take a small box of meaty gravy, add to milk or yoghurt and freeze into ice cubes. Simple!

We use baby food a lot for our parrots. Here's a simple recipe for turning some baby food and rice into a tasty treat.

Rice Dreams

Take two bottles of savoury baby food (chicken and pasta, lamb and vegetables, beef and pumpkin as examples), add one cup of milk and one cup of rice. Mix and freeze.

Well, enjoy your frosty treats with your pack. Next issue we'll be giving some autumn dog and cat soup recipes. Made for them, not with them!



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