

# Cuisine de Critters

By Phil Tripp (Pet Chef)



We aren't looking to put the pet food companies out of business nor threaten the livelihood of specialty pet biscuit bakers Sassy Treats or Happy Yappers. But what this column has accomplished in its first edition was stir a lot of interest in enhancing existing foods for pets with added nutritional recipes as well as coming up with treats.

There is a lot of controversy over pet food as to what it's made from in terms of meat products or by products, filler - whether it's indigestible fiber or vegetable residue - and what additives or preservatives the foods contain. While we'd never feed our pooch most super-market brands of canned dog food after reading the ingredients and water content, we've also made the choice of using dry food of a premium or super premium grade which we always use liquid with--whether one of our 'dog soup' recipes or water to cover with maybe a can of sardines.

We stay away from the more extreme disciplines-such as BARF (Bones And Raw Food), vegetarian or even Kosher diets for dogs-not because we don't see merit in some aspects of them, more because we're moderate in our views. We always give our pup raw bones and meat as well as healthy doses of fruit, nuts and veges that she'll eat; our birds get an amazing array of fruit, veg, yoghurt, meat and yes, even cooked chicken bones, lamb ribs or well done steak bits from organic growers.

Two meals a day for the parrots and one for the dog still takes time but it's a joy to come up with new things-whether it's Vegie Man that we made from an apple, two chilis, a carrot, raisins and a sweet potato on a skewer or Lisa's dog cookies for our friends' pets. So with this issue's content, we not only give you three easy recipes to try out on your fur or feather children, but also turn you onto a couple of excellent books on care and feeding, with recipes, for your flock.

When we started this magazine, we ran across Micki Voisard in Arizona who has a 50s diner-style store which is headquarters for Dog Chefs of America and doubles as a set for her and husband David to produce cooking segments for DVDs. Micki does a column

## Meow-Va-Lous Mackerel Munchies

Ingredients:

- 1/2 cup canned mackerel/sardines
- 1 egg beaten
- 1 cup bread crumbs
- 1 teaspoon brewers yeast

Method:

Preheat oven to 180 degrees C

Mix all ingredients in a medium sized bowl using a fork

Form mix into balls about the size of marbles and drop on greased cookie sheet about an inch apart.

Bake for 7-9 minutes or until balls are golden and crispy

Cool before serving. Store extra treats in an airtight container in the fridge or freeze.

Ever since we've had our pair of parrots, we've enjoyed cooking up corn meal mash with vegies and hot peppers, boiling up muesli with fruit juice as the base or lightly frying up the avian equivalent of Hush Puppies, Fafelafel or Fritters. But one the easiest things to do is to make up a set of mini-muffins which can be put in the fridge for up to a week or frozen for months in a zip lock bag.

Baking for birds is quite simple using baking powder rather than yeast and those mini-muffin tins make it a breeze to bake up a few dozen in a sitting. Here's an example.

for 'Fido Friendly' magazine in the US as well as teaching people to cook in their store. And she has produced a book in addition to three DVDs-Becoming The Chef Your Dog Thinks You Are - A Nourishing Guide To Feeding Your Dog And Your Soul!

Though it has some great recipes in the back of the book, it's essentially a humorous, common-sense guide to nourishing your dog through improving the quality of his/her diet. It tells how to schmooze your butcher, dealing with scraps vs crap, dealing with meats, fish, eggs and vegetable mixes as well as how to be a poop detective. It's a rollicking read.

Available for US\$14.95 through their website ([www.dogchefs.com](http://www.dogchefs.com))

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## Scent Hound Meatloaf

Taken from 'Becoming the Chef Your Dog Thinks You Are'

Ingredients:

- 1 - 2 Tablespoons olive oil
- 1 10oz. box of frozen chopped spinach or
- 1/2 cup freshly chopped spinach (or you can use grated zucchini or yellow squash)
- 1 garlic clove (optional) or
- 1 cup grated fresh carrots
- 2 cups fresh bread crumbs or
- 1 cup rolled oats
- 900gm ground beef (or chicken, turkey or chopped beef)
- 1 egg

Method:

Blend all ingredients. Shape into a rounded oval and place in an ovenproof dish. Bake 30 minutes at 180 degrees C. Cool. Serve with rice or just as is.

Adding cottage cheese and chopped parsley is an optional addition.

Smile when serving because you know your dog will love it and be healthier for it!

The cat equivalent book would have to be 'Real Food For Cats: 50 Vet Approved Recipes to Please The Feline Gastronomer' by Patti Delmonte available easily on Amazon.com for US\$9.70 when I checked (normally US\$12.95) plus shipping.

Aside from bizarre names for some foods and treats-Gizzard Goulash, Kitty Fondue, Tabby Tuna Popsicles -it also has special prescription recipes for allergies, reducing, kidney intolerance and restricted minerals as well as tandem recipes that both cat and people can eat together. This is one of the easy treats that features in the book.

There's a great recipe for a meatloaf from Micki that's been modified from the book in our recipe column above.

We've got a couple of bird treat books that we've purchased overseas but rather than reveal those in this issue, we direct you to an excellent book titled 'Feeding Your Pet Bird' by Petra Bergman (Barron Books ISBN # 0812015215) which is also through Amazon for US\$9.71 (normally US\$12.95) but I've also seen it at Borders Books in Australia. It's heavy on the importance of nutrition across a range of bird species-softbills, hookbills, parrots, budgies, cockatiels, lorries, amazons and macaws as examples-but also gives symptoms of poor feeding as well as supplementing commercial bird food with essential nutrients.

## Vegie Man

Anatomy of Vegie Man (homo holitorius):

- 1 stainless steel skewer from pet shop or specialist bird shop
- 1 apple
- 1 chunk of sweet potato
- 1 large chilli
- 1 stalk of celery
- 2 raisins
- 1 almond

Halve an apple sliced from top to bottom, remove apple seeds as these are toxic. Peel the apple leaving a smile - this may take some expertise to get the expression just right. Also do not be limited to a happy face - you can also stretch your artistic skills by making a surprised or scared expression.

Wash and peel a long piece of sweet potato; wash a big hot chilli and remove the stem (be careful not to touch your eyes after this) - for a more robust Vegie man you could always use a chunk of a cob of corn here. Wash celery and chop into two pieces.

Assembling Vegie Man is easy. Slide the apple to the top of the skewer; slide the two pieces of sweet potato up the skewer to rest directly under the head; then carefully slide the chilli/corn cob up the skewer. Next add the celery in the same fashion you did with the sweet potato.

Now insert an almond into the middle of Vegie Man's apple head. Then for the finishing touch add raisins to Vegie Man to create eyes.

Voila! Vegie Man is ready for his debut in your bird's cage. Attach the skewer in a safe, accessible position and watch the feathers fly as your bird first investigates his temporary Vegie visitor. Sensitive people and the odd queasy Vegan may not want to watch the carnage that ensues as Vegie Man is demolished.

I found it valuable, along with dietary information from Sally Blanchard's website for Companion Parrot Quarterly ([www.companionparrot.com](http://www.companionparrot.com)) magazine which hipped me to the nutrition needs as well as dos and don'ts in bird feeding. Our reward in taking the time to pick up the knowledge as well as care in preparation is the fantastic health and luster of our parrots. Plus, they get immense pleasure from tearing up some of their treats which may be as simple as nut butter rolled in flatbread pieces, green leafy vegetables toothpicked and rolled around fruit pieces or other delights. Like Vegie Man!

