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Cuisine de Critters

Canine Comfort Food

By Phil Tripp

I think it's going to be a long, cold winter. At least that's what we're planning on with the two dogs as the cold creeps in and we look toward new recipes for the coming months. For the high-energy hounds, we're going to be cooking up some canine comfort food for the chilly days ahead.

We've long been advocates of soups as a way to get vegetables into the diet, cooked up with meat and grains (if your dog is not intolerant to wheat and other carbs). The greener the vegetable or more orange the root, the better. Be careful though of green vegetables that have high levels of oxalates for dogs that may be prone to kidney problems. These include rhubarb, spinach, Swiss chard, beet greens, parsley, leeks and the quinoa grain, which are oxalate dense. Onions are out too as they can contribute to anaemia.

Sweet potatoes, pumpkin, cabbage, carrots, green beans, broccoli, squash, and most other green, leafy vegetables are perfect additives. Not only do these vegetables add healthy antioxidants to your dog's diet, they are also a significant source of soluble fibre and roughage which can promote intestinal health in your dog.



Our first soup, suitable for freezing, is Beef and Barley Hearty Stew with an extra energy boost for winter or the active dog in your life. This is great over your dog's normal premium dry food. Give your dog a third less of the dry food with a cup of this, warmed slightly. Too much of a good thing can make a porky pup.

Beef and Barley Hearty Stew

Ingredients

- 2 litres water - to be divided
- 1 cup barley
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- 450g diced (bite-sized) pieces of gravy beef or similar
- 1 810g can of diced tomatoes in own juice
- 1 litre beef stock (low sodium)
- 4 medium potatoes, peeled and chopped
- 4 carrots, peeled and diced
- 1 cup macaroni
- 1 small head cabbage, finely chopped, or 2-3 heads bok choy or Chinese cabbage

Method

Bring 2½ cups water to boil over high heat in a medium saucepan. Add barley and reduce heat to medium low. Cover and cook for 45-50 minutes until all water has been absorbed. Set aside to cool.

Heat oil in large stockpot over medium to high heat. Add beef and cook, turning frequently, until it's nice and brown - 8-10 minutes. Don't let it catch on the bottom of the pan.

Add tomatoes with all juice and 1.2 litres (around 5 cups) water and beef stock. Bring to boil over high heat.

Add potatoes and carrots, reduce heat to medium and cook, stirring occasionally.

Add macaroni and cook, stirring frequently, for an additional 10 minutes.

Remove from heat and stir in the greens and cooked barley.

Serve a cup or two over your dog's dry food. Remember to give slightly less dry food than recommended for the weight of your dog. Store remainder in large, sealed container in fridge. Makes 7 litres and can be frozen for up to 2 months.

Chook is Twice as Nice with Rice Soup

Ingredients

- 2 celery stalks, sliced fine
- 3 carrots, diced well
- 1 container of reduced-salt chicken stock
- 2 cups water
- 1 teaspoon dried thyme
- 2 cups cooked white or brown rice*
- 2 to 3 cups diced or shredded chook**



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Method

Load carrots, celery, chicken stock, water and thyme into a large pot and bring to a boil over medium-high heat. Reduce heat and simmer, partly covered, for about an hour.

Add rice and chicken and cook until heated through - just back to boiling point. Cool and serve at room temperature or a little warmer in the cooler months.

Depending on size of your mutt, serving should be 1 to 1 1/2 cups. If serving over normal dry food then remember to reduce the amount of dry food to 3/4 normal recommended amount.

*time-poor city dwellers can find cooked rice at your local Thai or Indian take-out

**really, really time-poor city dwellers can find already barbecued chook at their local BBQ chook take-away outlets (steer clear of spicy Portuguese-style ones)

Buddy Love's Brown Rice and Beef Stew

Mmmm - beef, dogs love beef. Lamb can be substituted but is more expensive and not recommended for dogs that are prone to urinary tract infections and related problems*. These dogs need a diet low in purines.

Ingredients

- 2 litres water
- 1 cup uncooked brown rice
- 1.5kg of gravy beef, trimmed of fat
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- 2 400g cans diced tomatoes with their juice
- 1 litre container of beef stock
- 4 turnips, peeled and diced
- 4 carrots, peeled and diced
- 4 potatoes, peeled and diced
- 1 cup lentils (make sure to wash and rinse, wash and rinse again)
- 600g bag of frozen baby peas

Method

Bring to boil 2 1/2 cups water over medium to high heat. Add rice and reduce heat to simmer at medium to low heat. Alternatively, you could do your rice in a rice cooker. Cook until all water is absorbed, which will be about 35-45 minutes. Set rice aside.

Cut meat into bite-sized pieces - see notes below. Heat oil in a stockpot or deep stewing pot over medium-high heat, add meat and stir frequently, until meat is browned.

Add tomatoes with juice and remaining 5 1/2 cups water and the beef stock. Bring to a boil. Add root vegetables - turnips, carrots and potatoes, and reduce heat. Cook for 5 minutes, stirring throughout.

Add lentils and cook for another 20 minutes, stirring occasionally.

Remove heat and stir through the peas and cooked brown rice.

Make sure it's cool before serving. This is a great dish to freeze in portions to reheat and serve on a chilly winter night. Remember that meat should only be stored in the freezer for 2-3 months.

*Breeds that can have urinary issues include the Beagle, Bulldog, Basset Hound, Cocker Spaniel, Bichon Frise, Dalmatian, Miniature Schnauzer, Lhasa Apso, Miniature Poodle, Yorkshire Terrier, Dachshund, Newfoundland, Irish and Scottish Terrier, and Irish Setter.

'BITE-sized' depends on the size of the dog. Bite-size for big dogs would be 2cm x 2cm; medium breeds would be 2cm x 1cm; small breeds would be 1cm x 1cm; and toys just need tiny chunks.

And finally, a meal you can share with your dog, Mutt Meat Loaf. Yes, it's that tasty! A meaty main that's sure to make your mini or mammoth mutt go 'Mmmm!'



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Mutt Meat Loaf

Ingredients

- 1 carrot, peeled and diced
- 1 celery stalk, diced
- 800g lean ground beef (or combination of beef & chicken)
- 1 cup plain oatmeal
- 1 egg, slightly beaten
- 1 tablespoon tomato sauce

Method

Pre-heat oven to 180°C.

Bring a small pot of water to boil. Add carrot and celery. Reduce heat slightly and cook 5 minutes. Drain and let cool slightly.

Place all ingredients into a large bowl and mix thoroughly. Place Mutt Loaf mixture into a loaf tin and bake in pre-heated oven for about 1 hour. Remove from oven and let cool. Serve on its own or over cooked rice.

Catch you next issue with more recipes for your fur and feather children.

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