

## 10 Best People Foods to Share With Your Beloved Pet

Why do so few pet parents feed their pets these healthy, high-enzyme foods? They help turn your pet from fragile to fit faster than you ever imagined. And help protect him from sickness, arthritis and more. They're probably in your pantry or fridge right now, so start today.

Analysis by [Dr. Karen Shaw Becker](#)

### STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- Regardless of the type of diet you feed your dog, it's important to include as many species-appropriate fresh foods as you can afford
- Research shows that offering any amount of fresh food to your dog's meals is beneficial
- Examples of fresh foods you can begin incorporating into your pet's diet today include pumpkin, blueberries, specific mushroom varieties and kefir
- Add new foods gradually to allow your dog's digestive system to adapt

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If you're a regular Healthy Pets reader, you know I'm a huge fan of homemade diets for pets. In my experience, a carefully balanced raw or gently cooked species-appropriate homemade diet is the optimal way to nourish four-legged family members.

The wonderful thing about homemade diets is you get to handpick the ingredients. You know the quality of the meat your pet is eating because you selected it yourself. You know the produce is clean because you purchased organic and/or you personally hand washed conventional produce to remove any pesticide residue.

Making your own pet food can provide peace of mind during a time when it has become difficult to find ethical pet food companies that use locally sourced or even U.S.-grown ingredients. With homemade food, you're in complete control of every ingredient that goes into your pet's body.

If you're a raw feeder, your pet's meals contain all of the enzymes and phytonutrients typically destroyed during food processing. Homemade food also gives you the flexibility to include a lot of nutritional variety in your dog's diet. You can include fresh fruit and veggies from your local supermarket, farmer's market or your own garden.

The goal in feeding your dog food he will thrive on is to mimic his **ancestral diet** as closely as possible without breaking the bank. My recommendation is to feed as much unprocessed, fresh food as you can afford. For example, if you can't afford to feed an all-fresh, living, raw food diet, offer fresh food snacks as an alternative.

Research shows that offering ANY amount of fresh food to your dog is beneficial. Maybe you can manage two to four fresh food meals out of 14 in a week. Or maybe you can go half-and-half by feeding one meal of processed pet food and one fresh food meal each day. However you do it, the important thing is to take small steps toward providing the best diet you can afford for your canine companion.

## 10 Fresh Foods to Add to Your Dog's Diet Starting Today

1. **Pumpkin** — Fresh pumpkin, either steamed or boiled (or canned 100 percent pumpkin), is relatively low in calories and high in soluble fiber, which is beneficial for dogs with gastrointestinal (GI) upset. Pumpkin helps regulate bowel function, which relieves both diarrhea and constipation. Pumpkin is also an excellent source of potassium.

While we're on the subject of pumpkins, don't overlook the value of raw pumpkin seeds (pepitas), which are a rich source of minerals, vitamin K and phytosterols. They also contain L-tryptophan and are a good source of zinc, vitamin E and B vitamins. Pumpkin seeds may also help prevent calcium oxalate kidney stones, reduce inflammation caused by arthritis and support prostate health.

2. **Blueberries** — Blueberries are available all year and make great training treats for dogs. Blueberries are loaded with phytochemicals and antioxidants and are also a good source of fiber, manganese and vitamins C and E. A good rule of thumb is two to four blueberries for every 10 pounds of dog a day. Replacing one of the processed treats you feed each day with fresh or frozen blueberries is a great way to increase antioxidants in your pet's diet.
3. **Kale** — Kale is a dark green cruciferous vegetable loaded with vitamins (especially vitamins K, A and C), iron and antioxidants. It helps with liver detoxification and also has anti-inflammatory properties. Add 1 to 3 tablespoons of minced or chopped kale to your dog's food daily, depending on body weight, as a great source of fiber, nutrients and whole food antioxidants.
4. **Kefir** — Kefir is a fermented milk beverage that contains beneficial probiotics that support the immune system. Although regular, pasteurized cow's milk can be irritating to your dog's GI tract, fermented milk is different. One of the best and least expensive ways to add healthy bacteria to your pet's diet is to **convert raw milk to kefir yourself**.

All you need is one-half packet of kefir starter granules in a quart of raw milk (preferably organic), which you leave at room temperature overnight. Add 1 to 3 teaspoons of this super probiotic to your dog's food one to two times daily for overall improved GI defenses.

5. **Mushrooms** — Some mushrooms are poisonous, so obviously you'll want to avoid those. Nontoxic, beneficial varieties include shiitake, reishi, maitake, lion's mane, king trumpet, turkey tail and himematsutake mushrooms. All mushrooms that are safe for people are safe for pets.

Mushrooms can help regulate bowel function, but even better, they also contain potent anticancer properties and immune system enhancers. You can either lightly cook the mushrooms in a very small amount of olive or **coconut oil** before adding them to your dog's meal, or try out my **mushroom broth recipe**.

6. **Broccoli** — Broccoli supports detoxification processes in your dog's body; contains healthy fiber to aid digestion; is rich in beneficial nutrients like potassium, calcium, protein and vitamin C; has anti-inflammatory properties; supports eye health; helps repair skin damage; and supports heart health.

I always prefer local organic produce, however, conventionally grown broccoli is one of the cleanest (most

pesticide-free) foods you can buy, so eat up! Your pet may prefer broccoli steamed, although many dogs eat florets fresh without a problem. Chopped broccoli stems make great detox treats, too.

7. **Sardines** — Fish are a rich source of omega-3 fatty acids, which are essential to your dog's well-being. If you supplement your pet's diet with fish, I suggest you use sardines packed in water. Sardines don't live long enough to store toxins in their bodies, and they're a terrific source of omega-3s.
8. **Sweet potatoes** — Sweet potatoes are rich in beta-carotene and antioxidants, and are also high in vitamins A and C. Sweet potatoes with purple flesh have potent antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties that may lower the risk from heavy metals and oxygen radicals.
9. **Fermented vegetables** — Fermented foods are potent detoxifiers and contain very high levels of probiotics and vitamins. Beneficial gut bacteria provided by probiotics break down and eliminate heavy metals and other toxins from the body, and perform a number of other important functions.

Adding 1 to 3 teaspoons of fermented veggies to your pet's food each day (depending on body weight) is a great way to offer food-based probiotics and natural nutrients. **[Find out more about this powerhouse addition to your dog's diet.](#)**

10. **Chia** — Chia is a seed derived from the desert plant *Salvia hispanica* that grows abundantly in southern Mexico. It is a source of plant-based omega-3 fatty acids and also antioxidants. And unlike flax seeds, chia seeds don't need to be ground. Chia seeds also provide fiber, calcium, phosphorus, magnesium, manganese, copper, iron, molybdenum, niacin and zinc. Try sprinkling some chia seeds on your dog's meals, or mix some with a little coconut oil for a super nutrient dense bedtime snack.

Remember to go slowly when introducing new foods to your pet. It's also a good idea to check with your veterinarian first if your dog has any digestive issues or other health concerns.

## Sources and References

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