



# Natural Pets: What's Cooking?

By Heather Stergos

Leading a healthy, natural lifestyle is something we choose for ourselves, and many of us would like to give that same healthy, natural lifestyle to our pets that we love so much but may not know how. One of the ways we can do this is by feeding our pets healthy, natural foods. Yes, there are healthier alternatives of packaged dog food, but creating a healthy, homemade menu of foods and treats for your furry friend is easier than you might think! And if they can eat as naturally as you, why not give it a try?

For those of us with dogs, making healthy, homemade food is easy, as our furry friends love foods such as oatmeal, rice, a plethora of veggies, pumpkin, sweet potatoes, eggs and some fruits like blueberries. Batches of food can be made and stored with airtight lids in the fridge for up to 7 days, typically, depending on ingredients. A couple of hours spent one day a week can keep your best friend fed all week. For optimum health a dog's diet should consist of 40% protein (animal meat, seafood, eggs), 10% carbohydrates (grains and beans), 50% veggies, fats from oils or meats, calcium (crushed or powdered eggshells or a supplement), and fatty acids (cooked egg yolks, oatmeal, plant oils and other foods).

While dogs can eat vegetarian or vegan diets it requires special attention to nutrition and health needs. There are some people foods that dogs should avoid, including onions, chocolate, avocado, tea, apple seeds to name a few.

If your furry friend meows rather than barks, there are ways to create a homemade natural diet for these furry friends as well. Cats have a trickier metabolic make-up than dogs and cannot tolerate the varieties of foods that dogs can. Due to this, cats need an animal-based protein heavy diet. This protein, coming from fish and poultry should be the main component of your cat's diet. Amounts depend on your cat's size, age, activity level and other health conditions. Essential amino acids cannot be synthesized by cats in sufficient amounts and must be supplied in the diet, without exception. These include: methionine, histidine, phenylalanine, isoleucine, tryptophan, lysine, valine, and most importantly, taurine. Taurine is a requirement for cats in order to prevent eye and heart disease as well as reproduction, fetal growth and survival. This amino acid is only found in eggs, meat and fish, making a diet strongly based on these foods, essential for your cat's optimum health.

Fats are another requirement for cats, and as fatty acids cannot be synthesized in sufficient amounts, they must receive them in foods. The fatty acids linoleic acid, arachidonic acid, an omega-6 fatty acid, are both necessary for cats and are found in meats and fish. While there is no minimum carbohydrate requirement for cats, there is a minimum glucose requirement. Cooked rice, wheat, corn, barley and oats are all good, healthy forms of carbohydrates/glucose for cats. Though cats are not able to digest vegetables in the way that dogs can, it is okay for cats to have some veggies in their diet, in small amounts. Choices of veggies that cats can digest easily are baked carrots, steamed broccoli and asparagus, winter squash and steamed chopped greens.

Though it may take some extra prep time, it is entirely possible for your favorite cats and dogs to also enjoy a healthier, more natural lifestyle.

And remember, for both cats and dogs, having fresh water always available is one of the most important things you can do to keep your beloved furry friend healthy and happy!

References:

ASPCA. (2018). Nutritional tips for cats and dogs. Retrieved from: <https://www.aspca.org/pet-care/cat-care/cat-nutrition-tips>

ASPCA. (2018). 9 nutritional tips to provide proper nutrition to animals. Retrieved from: <https://www.aspcapro.org/resource/9-tips-provide-proper-nutrition-animals>

## **The Humane Society of the United States-Foods to avoid feeding to your pet:**

- Alcoholic beverages
- Apple seeds
- Apricot pits
- Avocados
- Cherry pits
- Candy (particularly chocolate—which is toxic to dogs, cats, and ferrets—and any candy containing the toxic sweetener Xylitol)
- Coffee (grounds, beans, and chocolate-covered espresso beans)
- Garlic
- Grapes
- Gum (can cause blockages and sugar free gums may contain the toxic sweetener Xylitol)
- Hops (used in home beer brewing)
- Macadamia nuts
- Moldy foods
- Mushroom plants
- Mustard seeds
- Onions and onion powder
- Peach pits
- Potato leaves and stems (green parts)
- Raisins
- Rhubarb leaves
- Salt
- Tea (because it contains caffeine)
- Tomato leaves and stems (green parts)
- Walnuts
- Xylitol (artificial sweetener that is toxic to pets)
- Yeast dough

## **Easy And Quick Chicken Cat Food Recipe**

Prep time: 10 mins

Cook time: 40 mins

Total time: 50 mins

### **Ingredients**

- 2 LBS Boneless Skinless Chicken Things
- 1 Carrot, 1 Potato, 1 Butternut Squash [you may want to choose small veggies if you are only cooking for one cat]
- 1 Can Sardines [Whole]
- Olive Oil
- Fresh Herbs [Oregano, Sage, Thyme, Etc]

### **Instructions**

1. First, you will need to peel and chop up your veggies and toss them on a cookie sheet drizzled with olive oil, bake in the oven at 350 degrees for roughly half an hour, or until they are soft enough to mash up with a fork.
2. Meanwhile, heat a frying pan on the stove with a few TSP of olive oil. Slice your chicken in to strips and saute like you would for yourself.
3. Finally, mix cooked chicken, baked veggies, and herbs in a bowl and serve!

## Turkey, Rice and Veggie Mix

**This is an excellent recipe for pooches who may need to keep the pounds off. With a good balance of lean animal protein, healthy carbs and veggies, it yields 10 cups of dog food and can be refrigerated for up to five days.**

### **Ingredients**

- 6 cups water
- 1 pound ground turkey
- 2 cups uncooked brown rice
- 1 teaspoon dried rosemary
- 1/2 (16 ounces) package frozen broccoli, carrots and cauliflower

**Total:** Makes approx 12 cups (or 96 fluid ounces)

### **Directions**

1. Place the water, ground turkey, rice and rosemary into a large Dutch oven.
2. Stir until the ground turkey is broken up and evenly distributed throughout the mixture.
3. Bring to a boil over high heat, then reduce heat to low.
4. Simmer for 20 minutes.
5. Add the frozen vegetables and cook for an additional 5 minutes.
6. Remove from heat and cool.
7. Refrigerate until ready to serve.