

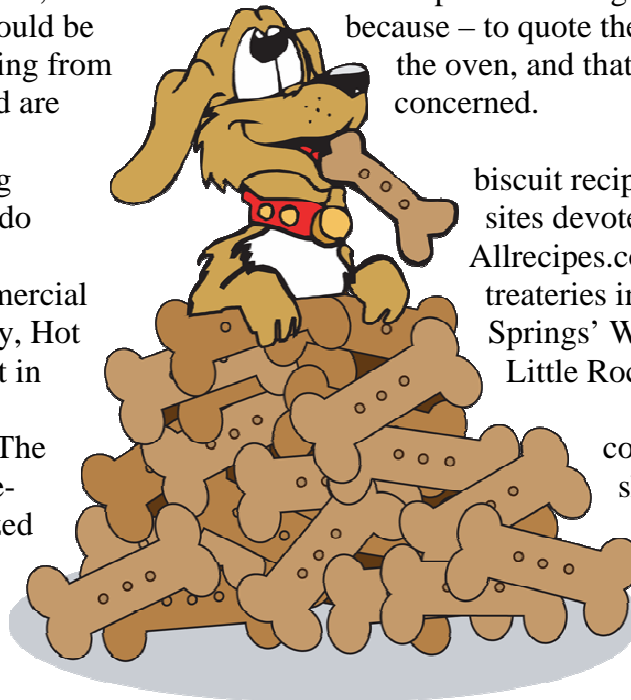
Baking for Bowser

by Abby Burnett

Why bake dog biscuits from scratch? Because doing so creates treats for dogs who are allergic to the wheat flour found in commercial biscuits, or to ensure that one's pets are eating wholesome, chemical-free, or even vegetarian food. Or it could be because – to quote the old Pillsbury commercial – nothing says lovin' like something from the oven, and that goes double where Lillybelle and Hiram-the-Hound are concerned.

It's surprisingly easy to find dog biscuit recipes online. Pet websites contain many examples, but so do sites devoted to human food, such as Martha Stewart, Pinterest and Allrecipes.com. And for anyone truly baking-impaired there are commercial bakeries in Arkansas, including Bentonville's Three Dog Bakery, Hot Springs' Waggin Tales Natural Dog Biscuits and Just Dogs Gourmet in Little Rock.

Below are a few recipes to try. The dough is cut out with a bone-shaped cutter, but it's simpler to cut the dough up into bite-sized triangles and rectangles. You can make your own cookie cutter by removing the serrated cutting strip from a box of wax paper and bending it into a bone-shaped cutter. Or simply cut around a cardboard template laid on the dough. The recipes are flexible, and bakers can vary ingredients, changing wheat germ and wheat flour to cornmeal or ground raw oatmeal, or adding salt, brewers' yeast (said to help control fleas), bits of cheese or bacon to the mix. Because these cookies don't contain preservatives, refrigerate or freeze extra biscuits.



One last word of advice: While it's possible to find recipes for cat treats on the Internet such baking is likely to be a waste of time. This writer once offered her cats a freshly baked batch of homemade tuna yummys, only to be met with looks of horror and scorn. Could it be that cats find it offensive when their owner bakes... from scratch?

TRY THESE EASY TREATS

Easy Pet Cookies

2 cups wheat germ
3 (2.5 oz.) jars baby food (chicken, beef or turkey)
1 Tbsp. water

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Combine all ingredients, adding more water if necessary to form a dough. Roll dough into 1-inch balls, place on ungreased cookie sheet and use a fork, dipped in water, to flatten the balls. Bake 20 – 25 minutes.

Basic Biscuits

2/3 cup pureed pumpkin
1/4 cup peanut butter
2 eggs
3+ cups whole wheat flour

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Line a cookie sheet with parchment paper, or grease and flour the pan. Use an electric mixer to beat all wet ingredients until well combined. Start by stirring in 2½ cups flour, adding more until dough is not sticky and can be kneaded. Knead briefly, roll out to ¼-inch thick, and cut in shapes. Place on prepared sheets; bake 20 – 25 minutes, until edges of biscuits are browned.

LIVER BISCUITS

1 lb. beef liver
2 cups water
1 and ½ cups wheat germ (can use regular or toasted)
1 and ½ cups all-purpose flour (more or less)

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Combine liver and water in a medium-sized pot on the stove, and bring water to a boil; simmer for 10 – 20 minutes, until meat is no longer pink inside. Remove from heat, let cool, then place meat and broth in bowl of a food processor. Puree.

Add wheat germ and flour to pureed liver, pat out and cut in shapes. Bake on greased cookie sheets for about 20 minutes, until biscuits are firm. (Biscuits will harden a bit more when cool.)

And finally, a recipe for when you really, really love your dog:

DOG BISCUITS

From *The King Arthur Flour 200th Anniversary Cookbook*, by Brinna B. Sands, Countryman Press, Woodstock, Vermont, 1991

1 cup (about ½ lb.) beef liver, cooked and minced
2 – 3 cloves fresh garlic, minced
2 and ½ cups water (if possible, use water you've boiled eggs in; it is very nutritious)
1 tsp. honey or sugar
1 Tbsp. or packet active dry yeast
½ cup warm water (for dissolving yeast)
3 and ½ cups King Arthur unbleached all-purpose flour
2 cups King Arthur stone ground whole wheat flour
2 cups cornmeal (whole cornmeal, if possible)
1 and ¾ cups old-fashioned rolled oats
¼ cup wheat germ
1 cup non-fat dry milk
½ cup brewers' yeast (optional)
4 tsp. iodized salt
3 eggs, beaten
1 egg, beaten with ½ cup milk (for brushing tops of biscuits)

Making the dough: Rinse and cut the raw liver into small pieces. Combine this with the garlic and water

in a saucepan. Bring to a boil, cover pot, reduce heat to a simmer and cook for 15 minutes. Remove from stove and let cool. When cool, grind or puree this mixture (water included) and set aside.

Dissolve honey and yeast in ½ cup of warm water and set aside. In a large mixing bowl, blend the flours with the cornmeal, oats, wheat germ, dry milk, brewers' yeast and salt. Add the cooled liver/garlic mixture, the dissolved yeast and the beaten eggs to the dry ingredients. With a large spoon, mix this together well.

Kneading & Resting: Turn mixture out onto a work surface that has been dusted with flour. Knead as you would bread dough for at least 4 – 5 minutes. Return dough to mixing bowl, cover, put someplace warm to rest for 15 minutes to relax the gluten in the flour. Preheat oven to 300 degrees and grease 2 or 3 cookie sheets.

Shaping: Divide dough into 3 equal parts, leaving 2 in the bowl. Roll out one-third of dough with a rolling pin until 1/8 to ¼-inch thick. Cut or shape into biscuits, "depending on the size of the recipient." Place fairly close together on cookie sheet; repeat with remaining dough. (Dough may be frozen and baked later if there isn't enough oven space.)

Glazing & Baking: Brush the egg/milk mixture over tops of biscuits and bake for 1 hour. Turn oven off and leave biscuits in oven overnight or for several hours, until they are "dog biscuit" hard.

Reserve a week's worth and store this somewhere cool. The rest may be frozen.