

COOL CHOW

Icy Treats for Hot Summer Days

by Sandra Murphy



In 2015, manufacturers of commercial dog and cat foods and treats issued 28 recalls, some for multiple products, due to the potential presence of listeria or salmonella bacteria, mold, dangerous levels of cumulatively harmful propylene glycol, inadequate thiamine, elevated levels of vitamin D, off odors or labeling problems (Tinyurl.com/PetFoodManufacturerRecalls). In response, homemade treats have grown in popularity to ensure that pets enjoy safe and healthy snacks.

"Most summer fruits work naturally to cool the body," advises Cathy Alinovi, co-author of *Dinner PAWSible: A Cookbook of Nutritious Homemade Meals for Cats and Dogs*, in Pine Village, Indiana. "Healthful treats, made from the best ingredients, are a good way to take a break from summer heat."

She suggests taking a refreshing look at low-calorie fruits and veggies such as stuffed celery used in creative, tasty ways. After removing strings, fill celery logs with plain yogurt and

freeze. To serve, cut into one-bite pieces appropriate for a dog's size.

Another easy favorite is filling an ice cube tray two-thirds full with Greek-style or traditional plain yogurt mixed with diced strawberries or whole blueberries and freeze overnight. For cats, omit the fruit and instead add bits of mercury-free water-packed tuna or salmon as a special treat. Add fresh or dried catnip to catch Kitty's attention.

"Once when fixing dinner, I dropped a piece of frozen yellow squash and the dogs dove for it," says writer Livia J. Washburn, in Azle, Texas, of her Chihuahuas. "Nicki waits for things to hit the floor; Nora showed her game face and won the Squash War."

"Obesity is the number one nutritional disease affecting our pets, so summertime activities that avoid overheating are vital for overall health," says Veterinarian Jeff Werber, a veterinary medical journalist with a Los

Angeles practice. "Proper nutrition is critical—not only to the foods we feed, but to the treats we give."

Twelve years ago, Rick Woodford's Belgian Malinois/Labrador mix, Jackson, was diagnosed with lymphoma. In order to keep him eating, Woodford shared his own food. Jackson lived an additional four years, in part due to improved nutrition. "Portion control is important," he says. "What's right for an 80-pound dog is way too much for a 30-pounder." Woodford, the author of *Feed Your Best Friend Better and Chow*, lives near Portland, Oregon.

Frosty Paws is a lower lactose version of ice cream for dogs and discriminating cats. Recipes for homemade versions can be found online. The basics are one ripe, mashed banana, 32 ounces of plain or vanilla yogurt and two tablespoons of honey, all mixed in a blender and frozen in small ice cube trays. Variations may substitute goat's milk yogurt or add a quarter-cup of strawberries, cranberries or blueberries for antioxidants in lieu of the honey.

Frozen vegetable broth, primed with added bits of cooked chopped spinach, broccoli, carrots or a small cheese cube, is a hit with dogs. Cats like theirs with tidbits of chicken, turkey or a few shreds of cheese.

Using a bone-shaped ice cube tray lets humans know it's the pet's treat. "When I was developing frozen treat recipes, my husband came in from the yard one hot afternoon and went straight to the freezer," says Paris Permenter about John Bigley, co-authors of *The Healthy Hound Cookbook*, in Cedar Park, Texas, who live with mixed breeds Irie and Tiki. "I watched him eat two helpings of the dog ice cream and then told him what it was. We often share our food with our dogs. It was nice for them to share their goodies with us!"

The bottom line for the best summertime treats is to go healthy, be creative, use fresh ingredients, don't overindulge and stay cool.

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Watermelon Slush

Low-calorie watermelon is high in potassium and magnesium plus vitamins A and C; filled with fluid, it helps prevent dehydration. Blackstrap molasses has less sugar and more minerals than other sweeteners.

- 2 cups cubed watermelon, seeds removed
- 1/2 cup strawberries
- 1 Tbsp. blackstrap molasses
- 1/2 cup coconut water
- 1 cup ice

Combine all ingredients in a blender and mix.

Serve in a bowl as a slushie treat or pour into ice cube trays and freeze.

Or share a slice of fun. Many dogs love plain watermelon slices. Be sure the animal doesn't eat the seeds or rind.

Source: *The Healthy Hound Cookbook*, by Paris Permenter and John Bigley

Plum and Apple Coolers

One batch makes enough cubes to treat both a large- and medium-size dog.

(10-lb dog: 1 to 2 cubes; 20-lb dog: 3 to 4 cubes; 40-lb dog: 4 to 5 cubes; 60-lb dog: 5 to 6 cubes; 80-lb dog: 6 to 7 cubes; 100-lb dog: 7 to 8 cubes)

- 6 plums, washed and pitted
- 1 Tbsp filtered water, to begin
- 1 apple, peeled, cored and cut into 1/4-inch cubes (no seeds)

Purée the plums and water in a blender or food processor. Add another 1 or 2 table-spoons of water if needed.

Spread the apples in the ice cube tray and spoon the plum purée on top. Don't pack, or it will become a denser cube.

Freeze for 4 hours.

Serve the cubes one by one (outdoors may be best) or in a big bowl.

Source: *Chow*, by Rick Woodford

Fido's Frozen Fruit Popsicles

- 4 cups water
- 1 Tbsp blackstrap molasses (optional)
- 1 cup fresh fruit (no grapes or raisins), chopped

Wash and core all fruit. Blueberries and strawberries are popular with most dogs, while others enjoy melons, peaches and apples.

Chop fruit into bite-sized pieces.

Mix fruit with water and molasses.

Freeze the mix in ice cube trays, small tubs or Popsicle molds.

Source: *The Healthy Hound Cookbook*, by Paris Permenter and John Bigley

Mango Sorbet

- 2 ripe mangos, peeled
- Juice of 1 orange
- Juice of 1 lime
- 1/2 cup unsweetened almond milk

Add all ingredients to a blender and purée.

Pour mixture into ice cube trays and freeze overnight.

Transfer frozen cubes to a zip-top plastic bag; stores up to 2 months in the freezer.

Source: *The Healthy Hound Cookbook*, by Paris Permenter and John Bigley



photo courtesy of The Healthy Hound Cookbook

INGREDIENTS TO AVOID

Avoid peanut and other nut butters or any ingredient with xylitol, grapes and raisins, macadamia nuts, coffee and caffeine, onions, chives, garlic, nuts and salty snack foods. Chocolate is also on the no-go list; the darker the chocolate, the worse it is for pets; baking chocolate is the most dangerous. If a pet eats any of these, try to determine how much and contact the family veterinarian, a veterinary emergency clinic or the ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center at 888-426-4435.

For a full list of foods to avoid, visit Tinyurl.com/ASPCA-Foods2Avoid