



# Paw Prints

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Columnist

## Healthy “people food” for your dog

So Fido has finally learned to sit quietly and not beg at the table during dinnertime. What an accomplishment for your furry friend. But now that he’s been so good, doesn’t he deserve a table scrap?

When most pet parents are thinking of “people food” or table scraps, they’re thinking of leftover hunks of fat, pizza crust, bones, or chunks of gravy on mashed potatoes. These types of table scraps are NOT healthy for your dog. Those types of scraps are usually very high in fat and calories and low in nutrients, plus these rich tidbits may also cause digestive upset and can contribute to pancreatitis, and could pose a choking hazard for your dog. Another common concern with feeding table scraps is that it causes obesity, while this is certainly a concern, it doesn’t need to be the case.

So, while most people

have heard that sharing food directly from your plate isn’t the best idea, there are lots of table scraps that are safe and healthy to share with your pooch. Many pet parents make their own dog food, and their dogs eat “people foods” without a problem. If you look at the can or bag you feed your dog every day, and look at the ingredients, you can see that it’s food that we eat also, such as chicken, sweet potatoes, peas and maybe a few grains.

Remember, dogs are omnivores like us and can eat a healthy variety, too. Some of the foods to avoid for your furry family member are high-fat foods like bacon, sausage, gravy-covered meat, beef trimmings and poultry skin.

Several common seasonings, including onions, garlic and chives can create problems for your furry friend by triggering irritation in their gastrointestinal tract, possibly leading to serious red-blood-cell damage, and even liver damage.

Avocados are also toxic to dogs and contain an element known as persin in their leaves, fruit, seeds, and even bark.

Caffeine is harmful to animals due to the presence of methylxanthines, chemicals which can be found not just in coffee, but also tea, colas, energy drinks and chocolate. But chocolate is a double whammy of sorts to your furry friend because it also contains theobromine, another potentially toxic

element that can trigger reactions like vomiting and spasms.

And remember, though grapes and raisins offer nutritional benefits for humans, it’s imperative to keep them out of your dogs reach. Macadamia nuts might make a great souvenir from a Hawaiian vacation, but it’s a treat that can prove fatal for your pooch, whether eaten raw or roasted. If you have a weak spot for macadamia nuts, make sure to keep the jar tightly closed and out of your dog’s reach at all times.

Knowing what your dog cannot indulge in makes life easier for both of you.

So what people food is healthy and nutritional to share with Fido?

When you think healthy for yourself, you are thinking healthy for your dog. Fresh fruits, veggies and lean meats are the best treats for your pooch.

Many veterinarians recommend that pet parents do not share table scraps with their pets; if you do plan to share with your dog, the following foods are pet-friendly and low in fat and sugar:

You can serve your pet fresh fruits and veggies such as slices of pears, cantaloupe, oranges, bananas, blackberries, green beans and seedless watermelon. And don’t forget to pack a baggie for that car trip with summer around the corner with small slices of carrots, apples, strawberries and blueberries, it can help

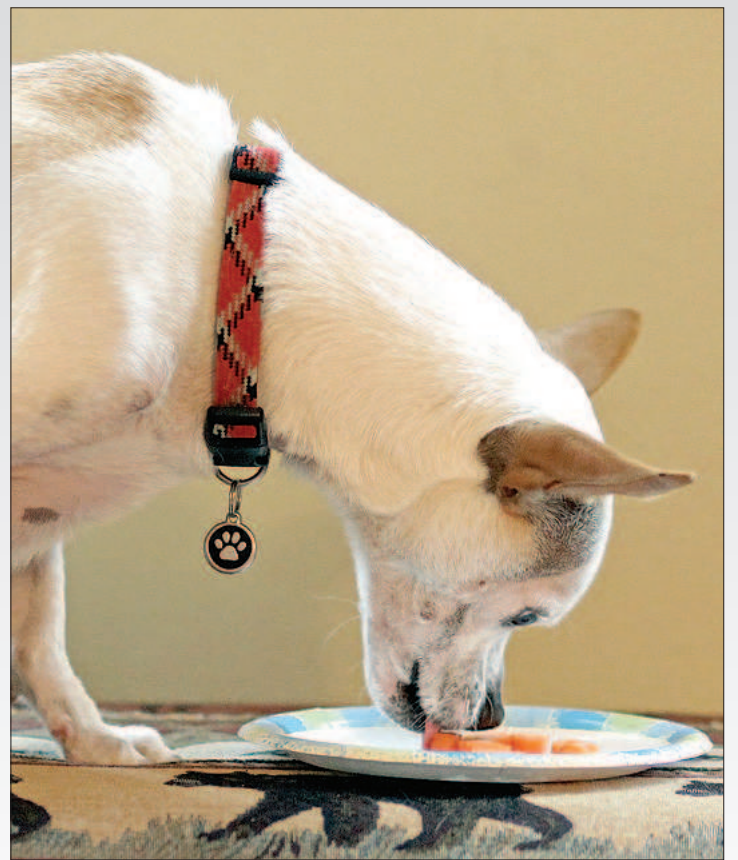


PHOTO BY JODI SCHNEIDER MCNAMEE

Carrot slices are one of Oliver’s favorite treats.

hydrate your furry friend.

Note that although you can give your dog apple slices, do not give him the core or the seeds, which contain arsenic.

Adding a teaspoon of canned pumpkin or sweet potatoes once in a while to Fido’s dinner is a great treat. Both are a good source of fiber and beta carotene.

Always check with your veterinarian when introducing any new food.

Lean meat is also an excellent treat for your four-legged friend. Lean chicken, turkey, fish (make sure it’s

cooked well, raw salmon carries a parasite that can make dogs sick), or beef are great sources of protein. Even adding eggs to your dog’s breakfast is a healthy treat. But make sure to use cooked egg because raw egg whites can cause biotin deficiency.

The key to healthy table scraps is moderation. Let your vet know what you are sharing with your pooch. And to maintain your dog’s weight, keep those healthy table scraps to a minimum, especially for tiny dogs.

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