

Portland author debuts second canine cookbook

By Jodi Schneider McNamee
Correspondent

Author Rick Woodford was inspired to cook for canines after his beloved Belgian Malinois-Labrador mix, Jackson, was diagnosed with cancer.

Jackson's appetite diminished soon after he was diagnosed with lymphoma in 2005. According to Woodford's veterinarian oncologist, Jackson had only nine to 12 months to live if he responded well to treatment.

It was a few days before Christmas while Woodford was shopping in a grocery store when Jackson's veterinarian called to give him the heartbreaking diagnosis. Devastated, Woodford asked the butcher in the grocery store for two steaks, and that night Jackson ate steak and baked potatoes with his pet parent.

Since Jackson would not eat his usual kibble, Woodford began cooking up real food such as chicken and vegetables and began dishing it out to Jackson a few times a week to encourage his

appetite any way he could. Woodford found that when Jackson's interest in food picked up and his eagerness for his walks returned. So he began increasing the amount of homemade food he was giving Jackson. His strength returned and he began chasing Woodford's puppy Raleigh around the yard.

"After about six months of cooking for Jackson, it was obvious that the food had made a significant contribution to his recovery," Woodford said.

Eighteen months after Jackson was diagnosed with lymphoma, he showed no signs of slowing down and was in remission.

"Initially I didn't have any knowledge of how to feed a dog other than scooping food out of a bag," Woodford said. "When Jackson became ill, I started researching canine nutrition. I created the largest database on canine nutritional requirements using the National Research Council's recommendations and the USDA's nutrient values for foods then cross-referenced it against various illnesses. The

database allows me to create recipes and instantly figure out where to adjust them."

As Jackson improved, Woodford's neighbors began asking him to cook for their dogs as well. Woodford soon launched a successful custom dog-food cooking business called Dog Stew.

"Jackson was the inspiration behind Dog Stew, which I opened in 2007," explained Woodford. "It was his story that led people to ask me for recipes that would help other illnesses like heart disease, kidney disease, liver disease and diabetes. Dog Stew was a service that delivered prepared meals to people's homes in portioned amounts to make feeding simple.

"I closed Dog Stew in 2008 because I couldn't get the financing to expand. I had toyed with the idea of writing a book for a few years and after closing Dog Stew because I wanted to make sure that my recipes for dogs with illnesses could be made more widely available."

So Woodford created a canine cookbook that would allow him to help a larger

audience, and after four years of immense research his first book, "Feed Your Best Friend Better" was published in 2011.

"When Jackson passed away in 2010, I wanted 'Feed Your Best Friend Better' to be his legacy," said Woodford.

"Feed Your Best Friend Better" makes the transition from commercial dog food to homemade dog food simple, so you can make natural food for your dog every day. Woodford's recipes use a variety of herbs and spices for their antioxidant properties.

Woodford's second canine cookbook "Chow: Share the Foods You Love with the Dogs You Love," was recently published in November 2015.

"I've expanded on many of the ideas in 'Feed Your Best Friend Better,' but focusing on some very simple and innovative ways to use the ingredients that are on your cutting board."

"Chow" describes the incredible power of foods to assist both people and their dogs to lead healthier lives and incorporates unique



PHOTO PROVIDED

Rick Woodford will speak at Paulina Springs Books in Sisters.

methods of bringing them to both the reader's plate and their dog's bowl.

"Chow" also continues Woodford's dedication to pets with serious ailments by providing recipe recommendations to assist dogs with allergies and other illnesses.

Currently Woodford and his partner have four dogs, including Grace, a Chow-Jindo mix, who was rescued from South Korea.

The author will sign his book at Paulina Springs Books on April 9, at 6 p.m. At the book signing Woodford will be doing a presentation on doggie nutrition and a cooking demonstration.

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