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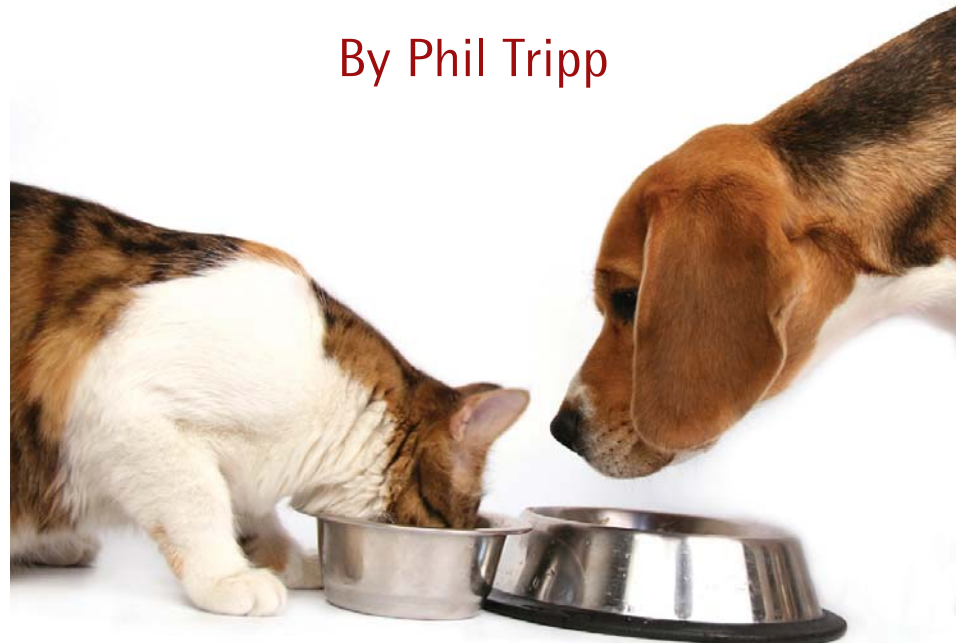


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Cuisine *de* Critters

By Phil Tripp



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Yuck! That's what our parrot friend Widget says, whether the food is good or not. He also says Yum Yum, but that's no indicator of enjoyment, it's just a habit reaction of speech to the prospect of being fed. Humans have the same reaction, especially kids, to being fed what's good for them—whether they've tasted it or not.

While dogs and cats are considered carnivores, they actually need vegetables too. Cats and dogs can't generally handle grains that easily, but can deal with sprouts. Parrots can't survive on seed alone, but once sprouted, they're a powerhouse of nutritional wonder.

With the recent problems in the US with prepared pet foods containing poisonous products, people are looking away from commercial kibbles and canned food and into making their own blends of meat and other ingredients. It's not an easy juggle however. But you can add supplements to ordinary food as I discovered with sprouts.

I'm no health food faddist. I've been overweight most of my life. As a 56 year old human, I've dropped almost 30 kilos in the past five months through a concerted program to turn my diet around (with a little help from medical technology) and the changes in food consumption for me, the parrots and the dogs has been quite remarkable. In the last issue, I admitted to becoming a juicer addict which resulted in more fruit pulp and vegetable chaff for the animals to have as additives to their diet. The result has appeared to be better plumage and fur, brighter eyes and a more perky nature. But who knows? It may be any number of factors as we have been vigilant in maintaining a varied diet of commercially prepared food, our own concoctions and very few treats.

So in my pursuit of personal health, the second new device I got was a sprouter for turning seeds into whole live food, much the same as the juicer let me convert fruit and vegetables into extremely healthy foods. Not the glass jar sprouter with the screen on top that I've had for a few years to prepare sprouts for the parrots. This one was a \$60 German model (Bio-Snacky) with four plastic trays and a dome, engineered like a BMW to properly wet, germinate, humidify and drain any number of seed types in layers without any power or fuss. It's almost foolproof, except that fools can be so ingenious!

The range of things you can sprout are incredible and virtually all of them are healthy for pets—except avocado and rhubarb. Seeds are best sourced from large health food stores and you'll often find specific brands or designated seeds and beans for sprouting as well as mixtures. You should choose organic stock as a preference and take the time to ask a knowledgeable staffer about what they have in stock and what can be ordered.

The list starts with leafy sprouts—alfalfa, clover, barley, radish, broccoli, cress, arugula, fenugreek and mustard. Bean sprouts are simple—mung, adzuki, chickpeas, soy, lentils, turtle beans, greenpeas, pintos and kidney beans. But they have to be whole and not hulled or split/cracked as is often the case for soup mixes. You can also sprout almonds, pumpkin seeds and peanuts out of the shell.

So why are sprouts healthy for pets and will they eat them? Feeding is the more difficult part as most animals don't take kindly to a change of diet. In the case of our dogs, they have to have the sprouts mashed into their food while the parrots simply pick through the mess as normal. With the parrots, we often put cayenne pepper or red pepper flakes on top of the sprouts as birds love it and don't get the heat from the capsicum family, only the flavour.

But the health benefits are simple. Sprouted beans are up to 30% protein and the stem and leaves contain nutrients that occur due to their conversion from the bean. Sprouted seeds like alfalfa and wheatgrass contain chlorophyll when exposed to light and are a great additive to pets' diets, especially cats who love to chew greens. Don't they eat your plants? And don't you often see dogs eating grass?

Wheat is fast growing and once exposed to the sun, greens out nicely but needs more water and rinsing as it grows. This is due to evaporation as much as the greedy roots, but sunflower seeds are also a great green sprout. In both cases, use hard winter wheat or sunflower seeds that are specific for sprouting. And the easy to grow alfalfa and mung beans do nicely exposed to sun after the first few days of sprouting out of light.

Aside from the green sprouts for grassy harvesting, nuts beans and grains pack a healthy wallop of nutrients. Sprouted beans and grains have some of their starch converted and the process of sprouting makes them a 'live' food, packed with vitamins and minerals in an easy to digest form. You just have to adapt to hiding the sprouts in some foods first, just like with a picky kid.

As with preparing any fresh food, you have to be careful to properly rinse and store sprouts as they can go off quickly. Check vigilantly to assure there is no mould. You will soon learn how long each bean or seed type takes to germinate and grow to completion so you can alternate them and also stagger the germination with each batch. But sprouting is a simple process and healthy for you and your pets. And fun!!

A great amount of information is available from this site as to how to store dormant seeds, soak them, germinate, sprout, harvest and store the final product.
<http://www.sproutpeople.com/seed/critter.html>

So here are a couple of recipes to check out for a variety of pets.

Dog Fiber Brekky

Take two cups of all-bran cereal, two tablespoons vegetable oil, a cup cooked chicken and half a cup of sprouts. Mix together and serve.

Googly & Sprout Omelet (For dogs, cats and birds)

Fry one or two eggs beaten with one or two tablespoons of milk in a pan with vegetable oil, top with bean sprouts and two tablespoons of grated cheese. Fold and allow to cool before serving.

Cat's At It

Mix two medium eggs, a tablespoon of milk, three tablespoons of cottage cheese and two tablespoons of finely chopped alfalfa sprouts all together. Pour into a hot pan with a tablespoon of vegetable oil or butter. When brown on the bottom, turn and brown the other side. Chop into pieces and serve.

Bird Salad

Take a small feeder bowl and place pinches of mung, adzuki, alfalfa, broccoli, sunflower and chickpea sprouts (or any other combination) in a circle and let the parrots pull it apart.



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COMPLETE MIX

It all started with Complete Mix with Dr. Bruce Syme mixing grains, vegetables, herbs, and nutri-ceuticals into a bowl, adding water, and letting this 'muesli' style health food germinate overnight – ready to create a balanced vitamin packed meal for cats and dogs.



Just add fresh, quality raw meat to this mix, and you have the healthiest pet food ever made. Results are impressive – shiny coats, healthy teeth and gums, lots of energy and far less 'man made' diseases. When it comes to adding the fresh meat, Dr. Bruce recommends fresh, uncooked quality meats such as kangaroo or free range chicken or rabbit. Ingredients include whole cracked cereal grains, mixed vegetables, garlic, parsley, yeast, wheat grass, kelp, lecithin, calcium and Vitamin C. Like any new diet, animals require a week or two to adjust, but improvements will be seen within weeks, and will last a life time. The itch, the scratch, the dull coats and inflamed skin will simply disappear.

HEALTH BOOSTER

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