

## Part 1: Everything I know about dog food (and a few things I wish I didn't). By Linda Knilans

I was talking to some one at one of the recent dog shows and they made a statement that they never feed their dogs people food. I got to thinking about this and how we as consumers have become brained washed. I mean think about it, what is dog food besides cooked and dried people food? (Assuming you are buying a premium grade kibble, if you are buying the cheapest thing on the shelf at the grocery store then most if not all of the ingredients are rejected people food or the waste material left after processing people food. Things like chicken feet, intestines, and beaks don't really sound very appetizing to me.)

I thought I would write a series of articles on what I know about dog food. I am not a vet or a nutritionist; I encourage you to research this topic and come to your own conclusions.

So what do I know about dog food? Well let me tell you.

Packaged "Dog Food" didn't really become popular until the late '40's, about the same time that television commercials started telling people what they should buy. I grew up in a small town in rural Wisconsin. In the early '50's my father started working at what has become one of the largest brand name dog foods in the nation. When my dad worked there, horses and cows from the local farms that were lame or down, (laying down and not able or willing to get up which means they were sick and would die soon) old cows no longer able to produce calves or milk and old chickens that were no longer able to lay eggs were the primary source of animal protein in this original dog food. They were not butchered and processed the way an animal is for human consumption, instead the animal was skinned and the entire creature was ground up guts, bones, stomachs, intestines and all. Not a pretty picture.

This ground up mess was then put in a huge vat and cooked at high temperatures for a day or two. A process called rendering. As this cooled the fats came to the top and were skimmed off. (This is the animal fat listed in most dog foods.) What remains is turned into something that looks like light brown cornmeal and is what is listed as "meat and bone meal" in dog foods. According to my father, the meal was added to ground corn, at a percentage of about 70% corn and 10% meat or bone meal and 10% rendered fat. The other 10% was mainly water, sugar and a bunch of preservatives to give the dog food a longer shelf life and flavorings that smell good to the dog. This stuff was all mixed together like cookie dough, ran through a machine called an extruder that applied high pressure and steam and squeezed out the dough sort of like toothpaste from a tube and then sliced it into little pieces as it was extruded. When it hit the normal pressurized air it expanded into whatever shape the company thought was most appealing to humans. It dropped onto long screen like conveyer belts that ran through a low heat oven to dry it further. Once out of the ovens the kibble cooled as it continued down the belt, was top coated with rendered fat and garlic, to make it more appealing to dogs, then packaged in waxed coated bags.

My dad just recently retired after working at the same plant for over 50 years; certainly the ingredients have changed drastically during those 50+ years or have they? **Next month:** A look at some of the ingredients in today's "Dog Food".