

The Culinary Canine | Bromography

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If you've ever cooked your canine a killer chicken rangoon, you're not alone. Every day, pet owners across the country are sharing bites of their meals and concocting special feasts for Fifi and Fido. Realizing this, fellow dog lovers author Kathryn (Kit) Levy Feldman and photographer Sabina Louise Pierce decided to seek out some of the country's most delicious dog dishes. And where better to search than the kitchens of dog-owning chefs?

I had a chance to speak with Kit about the result of this research, *The Culinary Canine*.



What was your inspiration for *The Culinary Canine*?

Actually, the idea was Sabina Pierce's, the book's photographer. She was having lunch one day at a café with her dog Maddie, a wire fox terrier, and she wondered if there were any restaurants had actual dog menus instead of "a bite for her and a bite for Maddie." We had lunch a few weeks later and threw around a couple of ideas, one of which was the concept of Chefs who cook for their dogs. She had been to an event where the chef had told her he did cook for his dogs. This was around the time of the pet food recall in 2007 when a lot of people were beginning to cook for their dogs, since they didn't trust commercial dog food. We had no idea if there were any other chefs who did the same thing, but had no trouble finding more than enough for a book!

I know you have several of your own canines. Can you tell us a bit about them and their diets?

I have three large dogs: two Golden Retrievers (Phoebe and Sam) and a rough Collie named Amos. Actually what I have is a lot of dog hair! My dogs eat prescription dog food for various conditions (the Retrievers are both overweight and Amos has colitis) but all of them get chicken and often sweet potatoes or carrots mixed in. In fact, they won't eat dog food without a little human food "enhancement." They have sampled a few recipes from the book (don't tell the vet) and they do get special "turkey cupcakes" on their birthdays. Trust me. They are well fed!

Have their diets changed from *The Culinary Canine*?

We all (human and dogs) love Cornelia Guest's vegan dog treats in the book and Phyllis Kaplowitz's salmon burgers are delicious—again human and dog friendly. I would say that I am trying very hard to keep my dogs on their diets—especially the retrievers who will eat anything and everything—to keep the excess weight off their joints. However, quinoa, as in Chef Tanya Nune's recipe, has found its way into both the human and pet diets in this house as it is high in protein, low in fat and seems to agree with everyone!

How did you go about finding your subjects?

Often one chef would refer us to another—dog people tend to know each other and I would always ask for suggestions. The publisher actually determined which cities they wanted in the book so we tended to concentrate on those areas. I put queries up on HARO (Help A Reporter Out), searched dog friendly venues on the web and often would find chefs by checking out the sponsors of local animal friendly events. It also turns out that if you work for a pet-friendly hotel like Kimpton or Loews, the chances are pretty good you have a pet yourself.

Any New York chefs in the book?

We have 6 NY chefs in the book: Cosme Anguilar from Bar Henry; Cornelia Guest from Cornelia Guest Events; Kerry Heffernan from South Gate; Anita Lo from Annisa; Carmen Gonzalez, the Top Chef masters contestant; and Eli Zabar whose restaurants include E.A.T. and Eli's Vinegar Factory.



Did you notice any trends from your research?

When I was doing research for the preface, I discovered that the concept of recording what one feeds one's dogs dates back to at least 1575! English poet George Turberville recorded what he fed his working dogs as well as various concoctions that "cured" common conditions like mange. The ingredients for many of his recipes and those that followed in later centuries included very modern ingredients, especially oatmeal and barley. In fact, in 1893, Joseph Franklin Perry, writing under the pseudonym Ashmont, sounds remarkably contemporary when he recommends that dogs eat a varied and mixed diet of vegetables as well as

animal protein. Remember that these dogs were actually hunting dogs so they needed significant calories; our modern dogs tend to be less active, but the idea of feeding your dog a variety of foods is as old as keeping dogs as companions.

What was the strangest and/or most surprising recipe you came across?

Dana Tommassino and Margie Conard of Woodward's Garden in San Francisco, submitted Goat Shanks with Fennel, Coriander and Honey. Goat might be easier to find on the west coast but you can substitute lamb for goat!

The most over the top?

Aside from the goat, Eileen Watkin's recipe for Brown Rice Arancini with Sweet Potato and Ground Chicken is a little labor intensive but delicious!

What's next for you and *The Culinary Canine*?

We hope to do a second volume: *The Culinary Canine Lightens Up* focusing on healthy, light and organic recipes. Many chefs have their own farms these days and the concept of sustainability applies to pets as well as people. Not to mention that the pet obesity epidemic is right up there with the human one. I see this book as focusing less on big cities and more on smaller towns where farm-to-table is a common occurrence.



How can readers contact you with questions and/or suggestions for chefs to interview?

I can be reached at kfeldman@aol.com or my website: <http://www.kitfeldman.com>. You can follow The Culinary Canine on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) and on our [blog](#).

Is there anything else you'd like to add?

Sabina's photos are essential to the picture we paint of chefs outside of the kitchen. When they connect with their dogs, they truly are different people from the often harried, hassled facilitators they are in the kitchen. You can view her work, including photos from the book, at www.sabinalouiseperce.com.

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All are welcome to celebrate the New York book launch on October 11, from 6-8pm and the Kimpton's Muse Hotel, 130

W. 46th street. \$10 donation to the NY Humane Society suggested at the door.

For a chance to win a free copy of *Culinary Canine*, please comment below or on our Facebook page with the best meal you've made for your dog (or seen a friend make for theirs).