



What's NEW in

**YOUR DOG WILL EAT UP THE LATEST ADVANCES
IN THESE CRUNCHY, LITTLE PIECES.**

BY ARDEN MOORE

Simply put: Kibble consists of crunchy, small bites of food made in a high-heat process that dog parents spill into bowls for their dogs to devour. No mess. No fuss.

Look around today, however, and you encounter kibble undergoing a tasty revolution. "As more and more dog owners see their dogs as family members, it's likely that the humanization of pet food will continue and grow," says Betsy Flores, senior vice president of public policy at the Pet Food Institute (PFI), based in Washington, D.C. "We will likely also see more of a focus on sustainable ingredients, including alternative protein sources, such as insect proteins."

The PFI has been advocating for safe and nutritious pet food and lobbying for science-based advances in the way pet food is made since being established more than 60 years ago.

"Pet food makers are continuously conducting research to determine the best dog food formulations to help our companions live long, healthy lives, so innovations in dog food are always occurring," Betsy adds. "Today, there is a humanization of dog food and a variety of types of food — from dry and canned dog food to raw and freeze-dried — that was unseen 20 years ago."

KIBBLE TRENDS

Companies now tout kibble as made from sustainable and alternative proteins, like insects such

as the dried black soldier fly larvae (yum or yuck, depending on your viewpoint), gently air-dried to maintain more nutrients with each bite for your canine pal, produced in USDA-approved facilities, made free of any GMO ingredients as well as void of any corn or wheat.

Enhanced digestibility is also becoming a big factor in kibble. The addition of healthy, digestive microbes in kibble bags is gaining attention, says Holly Ganz, PhD, chief science officer and co-founder of AnimalBiome, a biotech company that researches key healthy microbes in dogs and cats. "I do think that the fresh-food movement is changing ways that companies manufacture kibble," she says. "People want better ingredients in their dogs' kibble. There are healthier options now that improve the microbiome in dogs for better digestive health."

She cites two examples: Hill's Gastrointestinal Biome Dry Dog Food and Purina One Microbiome Balance.

Pet food companies, big or small, have become boldly competitive. You may have seen this in television commercials that pit one kibble brand against another, points out Dr. Tonya Cooksey, director of veterinary relations at AnimalBiome.



KIBBLE



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KIBBLE



"These types of commercials can make some people stop to think more about what they are feeding their pets — and that has pushed kibble companies to think hard about their ingredients, the quality and how their kibble is processed," Dr. Cooksey says.

WHY CHOOSE KIBBLE?

The ongoing debate continues as to whether kibble rates as healthy as other dog food options, like canned, homemade or refrigerated.

By comparison, traditionally kibble offers convenience at less cost and involves less time to prepare meals. After all, it takes seconds to pour kibble into a bowl versus dishing up canned food, making homemade meals or waiting for frozen food to defrost. Kibble requires no refrigeration, and the bags of food take up less space than canned foods or brands requiring space in your fridge.



TIPS FOR FEEDING

If you opt to give kibble to your dog — or combine it with canned, homemade or another type of dog food — give some food for thought to these tips and insights:

1. Don't assume more is better. Veterinary nutritionists recommend sticking to a month's supply of kibble dog food to maintain freshness. Avoid buying in bulk, because the kibble in an open bag is at risk of becoming stale, or even rancid, over time.

2. Shop by nutritional quality, not by price. Often, medium- and high-priced kibble brands provide more nutritional goodness per cup than low-priced, discount brands. It's like equating the nutritional value of an apple to a bag of processed potato chips. Check with your veterinarian for recommendations.

3. Dish up variety. Expand your dog's palate



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KEY DATES in the EVOLUTION of KIBBLE

Who invented dog kibble? Surprisingly, credit goes to an American electrician named James Spratt. He allegedly stumbled upon this idea for canine food while trying to sell lightning rods in the mid-1800s in the United Kingdom.

While watching sailors along riverbanks eating leftover hardtack made of flour, water and salt, Spratt got a real lightbulb moment. He believed this could be tweaked to offer a convenient form of dog food. So, he quit his electrician gig to create what was called Spratt's Dog and Puppy Cakes that consisted of wheat, vegetables, beet root and beef blood for upper class English people.



Late 1800s: Spratt's Patent (America) Ltd. begins producing dog food in the United States.

1922: Ken-L-Ration hits the market with its main ingredient being horsemeat. Fortunately, horsemeat is no longer in dog food.



1950s: The first commercial dry kibble was created through a process called extrusion. This fancy term means wet and dry ingredients are put into a machine to be blended and then cooked at high temperatures to create pieces of dog food known as kibble.

by slowly introducing different quality brands of kibble in different flavors. Follow the 3-3-3 rule: For the first few days, the food bowl should contain two-thirds of the current kibble with one-third of a new kibble. Then, switch to two-thirds of the new kibble for the next few days and finally, portion out the meal in the bowl with the new brand. This 3-3-3 game plan allows your dog to adjust to the new food and avoid digestive issues.

4. Scrutinize the label on the bag. Dog food companies are required to list their ingredients in descending order of predominance by weight. Make sure the first ingredient is a recognized protein, such as chicken, beef or salmon. Corn or grains should not be the first ingredient listed.

5. Look for resealable bags to maintain freshness. Or store the contents of the dog food bag in an airtight container with a lid. Because of the proteins in kibble, there is always a filmy residue in plastic storage containers that needs to be cleaned with mild dishwashing soap and warm water and allowed to air dry before putting in a new bag of food.

6. Beware of marketing hype. Claims of being “light” or “all-natural” carry no real nutritional clout. Look for brands that are labeled “complete-and-balanced” diets and ones that list feeding guidelines to help dogs maintain healthy weights.

Adds Betsy, “The most important item on the label of dog food is the nutritional adequacy statement. Dogs have varying nutritional needs at different stages of their life, so choosing the right life-stage formula is crucial.” 🐾



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NOT the same-old Kibble

Looking for a kibble refresh?
Check out what's now on the shelves.



Hill's Prescription Diet Gastrointestinal Biome Dry Dog Food.
From \$51.99; chewy.com



Purina One Microbiome Balance.
From \$15.14; chewy.com



Solid Gold NutrientBoost Hund-N-Flocken, powered by plasma. From \$21.99; solidgoldpet.com



Hi Bio Beef SuperFood, air dried, low heat.
\$46.99/3.2lb bag; evangersdogfood.com



Nature's Logic Distinction. 100% all natural, no synthetic vitamins, certified plastic neutral product produced with 100% renewable electricity. From \$21.99; hollywoodfeed.com



Open Farm Kind Earth Premium Insect Recipe (made from dried black soldier fly larvae). From \$20.99; openfarmpet.com

1958

This year marked the creation of The Pet Food Institute, based in Washington, D.C. PFI's members represent a majority of all pet foods in the United States. Its mission is to promote pet-food safety innovation and provide science-based information on pet food nutrition and safety to pet owners. (petfoodinstitute.org)



The 1980s

This decade ushered in the first therapeutic kibble diets for kidney and liver issues produced by Hill's Pet Nutrition.



The 1990s

Pet parents saw new brands of kibble based on a dog's activity level and to maintain healthy weights as obesity became a major health issue.

2023

There's a big push for sustainable, insect-based kibble. Manufacturers argue that this new kibble equals more planet-friendly because insects use less land and water than traditional protein sources. Also showing up on store shelves and online: air-dried kibble, made from all-natural, human-grade ingredients and certified fresh, not rendered, proteins.

