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Lucky Dog Cuisine 2020: Human-Grade Dog Food

Dr. Janice Elenbaas, Co-Founder of **Lucky Dog Cuisine**, tells us just how important it is to feed our four-legged best friends a diet as rich in nutrients as we would prescribe for ourselves. We find out more about how this thriving little company has grown from strength to strength and why all dogs will be licking their chops after trying this nutritious, delectable diet.

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Tradition and real people are the driving force behind the success of this company. We did not jump on the fresh dog food bandwagon, we started the whole trend!

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DR JANICE ELENBAAS
Co-Founder Lucky Dog Cuisine



Did Lucky Dog Cuisine spring from a life-long passion for our canine friends?

My mother was the inspiration for Lucky Dog Cuisine. We got our first dog when I was 9 years old. Mitzie was a miniature poodle.

In those days, puppies didn't get kibble. My mom had gently weaned our pup off Pablum (a processed cereal for infants), **but when she opened that first can of dog food, she was disgusted by the smell and texture.** She couldn't bring herself to feed it to our precious dog.

So she started cooking.

Mom didn't have a lot of nutritional training but she did have a lot of common sense. She made ground beef, lamb, and chicken recipes that included heart and liver, and brown rice mixed with cheese and vegetables. That was more than fifty years ago!

I grew up thinking everyone cooked for their dogs! It was a lifestyle for me. When I had my own dogs, I continued the tradition. My kids were also never given processed food and I even made their baby food myself.

My dogs have been a constant in my life. I've never been without one since the age of nine! Generations of dogs have grown up and lived long and healthy lives on our cooked, lovingly homemade food. It is truly a labor of love. My dogs are so important to me that I just can't imagine feeding them anything less than the food I eat myself.

I am very proud of our humble beginnings. My mom passed away two years ago. I am grateful to her for passing on her love of dogs and expressing that love through healthy food for us all.

Can you describe your background?

I went to The University of Toronto and studied Physical Therapy as an undergrad. But I was frustrated with the lack of understanding about why diseases and physical ailments so often recurred.

After much research into another profession, **I became interested in Chiropractic medicine.** Here I learned that the body can heal itself as long as we take care of it. By removing the blockages to the healing process, we have a better chance of being fit and healthy.

When I say "blockages", it can involve physical, chemical, and emotional stressors. We remove physical blockages by adjusting the spine and allowing the nerves to communicate and direct the healing process. Chemical blockages are a result of toxins in our food,

environment, and daily living choices. Emotional blockages, such as stress, contribute to internal hormonal imbalance and expose us to increased levels of cortisol and other adaptive hormones.

Chiropractic taught me to respect the body's ability to heal. Nutrition is a four-year mandatory program along with kinesiology, pathology, and other health-related studies. It all slotted in with my natural approach to life.

When I graduated from chiropractic college, I went on to study animal adjusting, physiology, and nutrition in a two-year post-graduate program in the US. I was the first woman in Canada to complete the program and went on to have a busy animal practice in addition to my “people” practice.

I adjusted dogs, horses, and cats. **My involvement with animals led me to start the first Veterinarian Chiropractic Association in Ontario, Canada** and I practiced for twenty-five years before starting Lucky Dog Cuisine.

Can you explain to our readers a little more about your company and what services you offer?

March 2021 will be our thirteenth year anniversary. We offer seven meal choice options, which we ship all over the US and Canada. My daughter runs the Canadian division so we truly are a family business.

We started when the US was in the worst economic recession in history. People did not use online delivery systems and most didn't shop online. Back then, the only choice of dog food was kibble, canned, and raw foods. No one knew about cooked, fresh foods that could be shipped to your door.

You can imagine how dubious people were of our business model ever being a success. We needed to inform the public, expose our food, and learn the logistics of shipping frozen products. We had our work cut out for us.

We were the first online, fresh-frozen dog food company, and since then have spawned many imitators.

Our company is still family-owned and we do all of our cooking ourselves. We never use a co-packer so we have direct control over our ingredient sourcing, handling, and product safety. **Excluding the middleman means we know exactly where and how our meals are shipped and stored. They are delivered from our cooking facility directly to the client's door.**

Apart from the pride we take in our ingredients, we also have standout customer service. We treat people how we would like to be treated. We are responsive to peoples' needs and concerns and we want our clients to know that there are real people backstage making it all happen. We take the time to get to know our clients.

We take feeding dogs very personally and consider it a real privilege.



How do you feel about the pet food industry as a whole?

The pet food industry has to cater to many different lifestyles, philosophies, and opinions such as budget, accessibility, etc. As trends in the human food industry have evolved, we have started to see a different awareness in the pet food industry, too.

The pet food industry first started as a means for the disposal of foods and ingredients that were unfit for human consumption (dead or diseased animals and restaurant grease).

Meat rendering plants take the above-mentioned ingredients and cook them at high temperatures to destroy potential toxins but at the same time, this also damages the proteins and nutrients. This is why pet foods need to be “fortified” with vitamins and minerals since most have been lost in the rendering process.

Of course, people want to do the best they can for their animals but few want to take the time to research what actually goes into these meals. Marketing is a big part of the budget of any business enterprise but we firmly believe that our money should be invested in the quality of our ingredients.

How does Lucky Dog Cuisine stand out from other suppliers of homemade dog food?

Our experience and personal service certainly make us stand out from the rest, but we do take great pride in our ingredients. **We are the only dog food company in North American that uses fresh, all-natural cheeses and yogurt to help supplement our protein and calcium content.** We also add herbs such as basil, oregano, and rosemary to add extra antioxidants and minerals.

We believe that the majority of nutrition should come from the food we eat – a piece of broccoli is absorbed differently from a synthetic vitamin supplement.

Our ingredients include the following: grass-fed beef and pork, chemical- and antibiotic-free turkey, wild-caught fish (never farm-raised), extra-virgin olive oil (this means no chemical processing – no other companies use this due to the high cost), and pure filtered water for cooking.

All animals used in the production of our food are humanely raised and we know all of our suppliers personally. They know me to be a difficult customer. For example, it took me two years to find the right fish supplier who could provide clean, non-chemically treated fish!

All of our fruits and vegetables are non-GMO. We receive certificates of analysis from each supplier verifying freshness and safety. We use only the best ingredients that we would eat ourselves. My husband ate our food daily for a month to raise awareness for canine cancer. **And this brings me to the question: would you eat your dog's food?**

While on a Lucky Dog Cuisine diet, are there any noticeable physical improvements, in addition to longer-term health benefits?

Weight management is a priority. Obesity is a major health issue contributing to so many diseases, such as cancer, arthritis, and diabetes. Obesity is less of a problem when your dog is fed with high-quality food.

We also see dogs with cleaner teeth and fresher breath. The health of gums and teeth depends on the correct moisture and PH levels inside the mouth. And no, unfortunately, kibble does not clean a dog's teeth just as eating crackers does not clean ours!

Dogs who are on our diet have fewer ear infections and tear staining and there are no "hot spots" (inflamed skin lesions) on our pups! **Many of our clients say their dogs have become puppy-like again with renewed energy and playfulness.**

A strong immune system and less stress on the kidneys and skin can help with the natural detoxification process, which is why diet is of such importance. A good diet can also prevent behavioral issues, for example, a dog with low-grade energy and a sensitive tummy is not often happy to play and be part of the normal family routine.

Customers also mention that their dog's bowel movements are less frequent and texturally firmer, which is always a good sign.

Do you recommend putting a very young puppy on the Lucky Dog Cuisine diet?

Yes! Just like our human children, a good diet is the building block of a healthy life. We have, of course, started each of our puppies on our turkey and rice formula. I always like to start with one protein at a

time in the same way you would introduce new foods gradually to your toddlers.

Our meals are easy to digest for a growing puppy and I always ask people not to be surprised at how much puppies actually eat (they start eating less when they turn one). A growing puppy requires a high-calorie intake, as do their human counterparts.

How does your pricing compare to the likes of veterinary pet food or supermarket brands?

Kibble cannot compare to our food. Grass-fed meats and real ingredients are much more expensive than rendered meat “meals”. If you see an ingredient called “beef meal” for example, it means it’s from a rendering facility. Processed foods are always less expensive than fresh, whole foods and anything with a long shelf-life in your supermarket or local veterinarian clinic contains preservatives.

If our food is used exclusively, it will cost about three to five dollars a day to feed an average thirty-pound dog. If your budget means you have to mix it with kibble, getting some whole foods is better than getting none. Do the best you can.

Tell us a little more about shipping and your subscription program.

We offer a direct-to-consumer model. We start with an introductory price of \$69 US to sample our 14lb variety pack, which includes two packs of each recipe unless the client specifies otherwise. This signs them up for an auto-ship program that sends fourteen (one pound) packages of their choice every twenty-eight days. This can be canceled at any time and changed to whatever frequency desired.

We work on twenty-eight days because the average twenty-five-pound dog eats half a pack a day. For bigger dogs or multiple dogs, we offer a pack of twenty-eight portions for \$279.

If a client simply wants a one-time shipment, the cost is \$169, so joining our subscription program really is very cost-effective.

A one-pound package lasts five days in the refrigerator when in an airtight container and six months if kept frozen. We ship only on Mondays to make sure none of our shipments are kept in a warehouse over the weekend. Most orders are received within three days of leaving our facility.

Tell us about your woofers ;).

I currently have two Goldendoodles, Leo and Molly. Molly weighs 51 pounds and Leo is 53 pounds. He will be taller than his sister and loves to snuggle. Leo is our “velcro” dog while Molly loves her space!

Leo is eight months old and full of life. He loves to torment his older sister Molly who is nine years old. They spend most of their time wrestling, redecorating the house, landscaping the yard, and swimming in the pool, not to mention wanting constant attention. They make us laugh every day!



About The Author



Sarah Kirton

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A wannabe global 'food-trotter,' Sarah nurtures a deep-seated passion for food and cultural diversity and believes the two go hand in hand. Having lived in Europe for many years she has a great knowledge of Mediterranean and French cuisine. She now lives in Cape Town, the food capital of Africa. When she is not dining out or cooking up a storm you will find her kite-surfing on the ocean, up a mountain, or cuddling her cat Samson!