



October 20, 2006

## Making Your Own Delicious Liver Treats

**There is no reason for contributing to deterioration of your dog's health by giving it treats that are made of grains or flour of any sorts – the carbohydrates in those cause serious long-term disease.**

**Besides, when you make your own treats of raw meats or organs, you have a far better effect of your training efforts...**

### **Ingredients**

Sliced liver of any kind. The slices should be 5-6 mm (1/4 inch) thick - or less. The thinner, the better - and the easier to make.

You can use a dehydrator, but an ordinary oven will do too.

### **Procedure**

Put the raw liver slices in the oven on a rack that allows maximum access of air all around. (You can also use a pan - but it is less efficient, as it only allows air access from above.)

Set the thermostat of the oven as low as you possibly can. 50-60 degrees Celsius (130-150 Fahrenheit) is enough - anything above that will tend cook the liver - but your dog won't blame you for that (most dogs actually prefer slightly cook liver over raw liver...)

Bake the liver until it is reasonably firm and easy to cut with scissors. Open the oven often, so you let moist air out - this also help keeping the temperature down, if your oven cannot maintain the low temperature prescribed. The whole point is to bake the liver at the lowest possible temperature, so you really turn the baking process into a dehydration process more than anything else.

If you cannot get your oven to measure the low temperature, you can use your hand for measure.... A surface hotter than 55 degree Celsius will be too hot to touch for more than a second or two - so if you burn your fingers when touching the rack quickly, the temperature is too high.

When the liver is dry on all surfaces, you taken it out and cut your treats off the slices. Using a pair of scissors is easiest, but a sharp knife will do too.

If the cutting makes everything wet and greasy, you have not baked enough - back to the oven then.

If the liver is too hard to cut with scissors, you baked too long - better luck next time... the treats are OK though - you just have a problem you might need stronger tools for than what you might have in your *kitchen*...)

When the pieces are all cut to the size you want, you put them back into the oven, this time in a pan or on baking paper. Baking paper is best, because it is not totally tight and gives better air circulation around the pieces.

You now continue the baking until all surfaces are nice and dry and it is easy to grab a treat without getting greasy fingers. You should stir the pile regularly to accomplish this, still keeping the oven at the lowest possible temperature it can provide. If this is a problem, just open the oven often and let some fresh, cold air in!

### **The result**

The end result should be a pile of treats with a fairly hard and dry surface, but still moist and gooey inside. If you squish them, they should give in - but they should also rattle if you put them into a small container.

The liver is not really raw - but it isn't really cooked either. It is a nice compromise between raw food and practical usefulness.

The recipe is great for novices in the art of baking - you are supposed to do just about all the mistakes you should avoid when baking a cake... ;-)

### **Alternative for those who do not like liver...**

I have met very few dogs in my life who do not appreciate liver when slightly heated. But I have met many people who have trouble handling it...

There is also the question of variation.

Instead of the sliced liver, you can actually use any kind of meat or organ which you can get in thin slices - or make into something that is similar. The simplest is using ground meat, either as you buy it in the supermarket or from your food processor in the kitchen. Any kind of ground meat, organ, or whole animal for that matter (mice and fish are great...) can be used.

The problem is that if you make some flat pan cakes of ground meat and dry them as described for the liver slices, it will go into pieces when you handle it - and those pieces will be too small to be practically useful for training.

You avoid this by simply adding whole raw eggs to the ground meat. The ratio meat/egg depends a lot on the specific quality of the meat, such as its fat contents, bone contents (if you ground some whole animals yourself), etc. But start with 6

eggs to a pound of beef, so you get some slimy dough as the result, and then adjust when you see the first result.

You take this slimy dough and make pan cakes of it, and then you dry those pan cakes in your oven, exactly as described for the liver treats.

One warning: although most dogs will be extremely excited if you would use tripe, tripe is unfortunately extremely tough to grind (it takes industrial machinery – a kitchen grinder will rarely do....). When you know this, you do not need to use the excuse that is the real reason for most people to not use tripe: it makes the entire house stink in a way that will make your dog resist going out for a walk, and everybody else want to take the dog out for more and much longer walks... ☺

### **Using the treats**

I use a film canister in my pocket as "dog money wallet". One canister typically lasts 3-4 days, but on days with lots of training, it could be a canister per day, sometimes two...

The rest of what you need for 14 days can be stored in the fridge. Any excess should go in the freezer, preferably in an open container, so they get "freezer burnt" - that will eliminate the problem of them getting soft and greasy when you thaw them up.

Be sure to use the treats exclusively as rewards for work well done. Not because the dog is cute or begs.

And do count the amount of organ meat you feed this way as part of the dog's diet. As far as nutritional balance goes, you can count half the treats as raw, the other half as cooked – chemically, you probably hit something that is in-between.

Have fun!

Mogens Eliassen

-----  
Mogens Eliassen holds a Mag. Scient. degree in Chemistry from Århus University, Denmark (comparable to a US Ph.D. degree) and has 30+ years of experience working with dogs, dog owners, dog trainers, and holistic veterinarians as a coach, lecturer, and education system developer. He publishes a free newsletter "[The Peeing Post](#)" containing lots of tips and advice on dog problems of all kinds, particularly about training, behavioral problems, feeding, and health care.

For more information about Mogens Eliassen, including links to other articles he has published, please send a short e-mail to [contact@k9joy.com](mailto:contact@k9joy.com) or visit [www.k9joy.com](http://www.k9joy.com).