



FEEDING THE SNACK PACK

// BY RUTHANNE JOHNSON

JOHN TALBOT'S KITCHEN in Needham, Mass., is a happening place, filled with the aromas of peanut butter, ginger, and cinnamon. Even before the baking begins, as he pulls ingredients from the shelves, four furry faces line up expectantly, noses in the air. They know the treats he's making are for them.

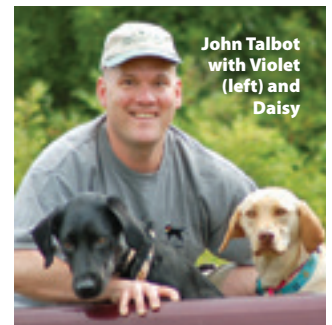
There's Charlie, a rescued Lab from Tennessee who lost his left front leg after being shot. And Violet, Daisy, and Sunflower, Labs from the same rescue organization. It's an exciting moment for the foursome when a morsel drops to the floor and Talbot calls out, "Clean up on aisle seven!"

Talbot began baking treats for his former companions, Labs Daphne and Sebastian, more than 20 years ago. "I've always been someone who likes to futz around in the kitchen," he says. "I started thinking that I could make things for dogs, too."

In the beginning, he looked to pet and human cookbooks and consulted his veterinarian for recipe ideas, swapping out sugar with ingredients like molasses and brown rice syrup. "The key is finding ingredients palatable for your pets," he says. Other tips include using organic, human-grade ingredients, baking in small batches, sticking to recipes, and incorporating the right spices. "Smell is such an important element to the dog's experience." It's the irresistible aromas and flavors that get tails wagging for his gingerbread cookies, seasoned kale chips, and ever-popular peanut butter crunchies (recipe below).

In 2007, after years of great feedback from other dog owners, Talbot traded in his lawyer's briefcase for a doggy chef's hat. Boston Baked Bonz now ships to thousands of customers across 50 states. Success has enabled Talbot to donate generously to animal charities, including Farm Sanctuary and the MSPCA-Angell humane society.

While Talbot now has a team of professionals whipping up treats in his company's small commercial kitchen, he still enjoys baking at home—and the peace of mind that comes from knowing that his pets' snacks are made from high-quality ingredients from trusted suppliers. "Being able to cook for [my dogs] and give something back is a simple way of making them happy and myself happy."



John Talbot with Violet (left) and Daisy



PEANUT BUTTER CRUNCHIES

(YIELDS 12 COOKIES)

INGREDIENTS

- ½ cup organic salt-free smooth peanut butter
- 1 cup hot water
- 1 cup organic wheat bran
- 1½ cups organic bulgur wheat
- ½ cup organic white whole wheat flour (or any flour of your choice)

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 350° F.
2. Mix all ingredients until peanut butter is well incorporated.
3. Using a large spoon or ice cream scoop, drop dough onto a parchment-paper-covered cookie sheet. Use a wet fork to press in the classic fork pattern on top, if desired. (Note: Dough will get harder to work with in just a few minutes, so create the cookies as soon as you mix the ingredients.)
4. Bake for 50 to 60 minutes, until the crunchies just start to turn golden brown. Enjoy the tail wags from your furry buddy as she eats something you made just for her!



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