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PHOTOS COURTESY STEVE BROOKS

Steve Brooks

Certified Professional Dog Trainer—Knowledge Assessed, based in Los Angeles

Steve Brooks became inspired to cook for his Poodle mix due to the dog's health issues and Brooks' own open-heart surgery in 2001, which prompted him to start living a healthier lifestyle. All of his recipes can be made for both humans and dogs, with small substitutions: Pumpkin pie becomes "pupkin pie," and poached chicken becomes "pooched chicken."

"I'm what you would call a 'foodie,'" Brooks says. "Most of my knowledge of nutrition comes from the vast array of veterinarians I've worked for and studied under, and much of my research comes from practical experience of over 20 years of hands-on working with thousands of dogs."

Brooks cooks for his training clients, and he develops recipes that other people can create for their dogs and, in Brooks' perfect world, use as positive reinforcement treats for training.

"I get referrals from the County of Los Angeles Animal Care and Control, which recently sent me a pit bull named Rumble," Brooks says. "The owners were required to do 10 hours of training with me. Rumble is also required to wear a muzzle when out in public. I fed Rumble my homemade salmon pate, delivered from a squeeze tube ... and paired it with pets on the head during our training walks.

"I was able to change Rumble's emotional reaction to other dogs from fear and aggression to eager anticipation that something good was about to happen," Brooks says. "When I can change a dog's behavior from wanting to kill every dog it sees to wanting to interact and play games with his owners instead, that's pretty rewarding."

Brooks has a lot of four-footed help in the kitchen. He has trained doggie students to be his sous-chefs — they can open the refrigerator, put trash in the can, and even place dishes into the dishwasher. He is also currently filming a Web series about cooking for dogs. Here's one of Brooks' clients favorite recipes.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup flour (wheat-free, gluten-free pancake batter)
- 1 tablespoon safflower oil, or melted, cooled butter
- 1 teaspoon honey
- 1 egg
- 1 tablespoon ricotta cheese
- ¼ cup rice milk or goat's milk (plain, organic)
- ¼ cup blueberries (great for coat shine and memory)
- Maple syrup for humans, or salmon oil for dogs
- A pinch of rolled oats
- For dogs, substitute 1 teaspoon yogurt and blueberries for topping

INSTRUCTIONS

- Mix all ingredients in a bowl (except blueberries and maple syrup/salmon oil/yogurt), make a well in flour, then beat in egg, honey, oil or melted butter, ricotta, and oats
- Transfer mixture to a pitcher for easier pouring, and let rest for 10 minutes
- Heat pan or nonstick griddle on medium heat until a drop of water sizzles on pan
- Add oil to pan, then pour in one pancake and immediately add a few blueberries on top
- Flip once or twice until golden brown, with batter appearing thick and tiny bubbles on surface before flipping
- Serve with a touch of maple syrup on top for humans — salmon oil on top for dogs.

Give one small pancake for a little dog; a large one for a large dog

- Pancakes can be broken up into little pieces and used as rewards throughout the day for good behavior.

You can use yogurt in place of ricotta, or a little of both. This recipe makes approximately two servings for people and a medium-sized pancake for a dog, or around three to five servings for dogs. Pancakes are best if eaten right away. To store, cool pancakes to room temperature, place a piece of wax paper between each pancake, and store in an airtight container for no more than a day in the refrigerator. Alternatively, store in the freezer for up to one month by placing each pancake in wax paper, wrapping in tin foil, and placing in an airtight container or freezer bag. After freezing, defrost completely, then reheat in toaster and let cool completely before serving. If left uncooked, store the mix in an airtight container in the refrigerator for two to three days.

