

Stuffing a Kong ® Fit for a King!

Why use a Kong?

Dogs are genetically programmed to hunt for their food. One reason there is such a prevalence of behavior problems in pet dogs is that they have so little mental challenge; they need to have work to do! So, instead of giving them their food for free, do what zoos are doing to improve the quality of life of many of their predator and primate species – give your dog problems to solve in order to obtain food. Dogs thoroughly enjoy unpacking stuffed chew toys and finding hidden food treasures!



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STUFFING TECHNIQUES

Why limit your Kong stuffing efforts to just a few dog cookies? This is just scratching the surface of the creative food acquisition challenges you can cook up for your dog. Here are some ways to jazz up your Kong stuffing repertoire:

- 🐾 The level of difficulty should be appropriate to the dog's level of skill and temperament – does she persevere or give up easily? Start easy. Any increases in difficulty should be gradual so the dog succeeds while developing perseverance.
- 🐾 Keep in mind that easy stuffings are loose and incorporate small pieces that fall out easily; more difficult stuffings are tighter, with some big pieces that will be more difficult to extract.
- 🐾 Give her all of her food this way, especially if she is an active, “busy” dog.
- 🐾 For greater difficulty, “nest” it by wrapping a stuffed Kong in a clean rag and/or enclosing it in a container (like a Quaker oatmeal cardboard canister).
- 🐾 Hide regular stuffed or nested Kongs around the house so that your dog has to hunt around to find them before unpacking them.
- 🐾 Clean your Kongs regularly with a bottle brush and/or in the dishwasher.

(See recipe ideas on the back...)

RECIPE IDEAS:

Basic Meal Kongs:

Layer 1 (deepest): dog kibble filling $\frac{3}{4}$ of the Kong

Layer 2: dog kibble and canned dog food mixed and stuffed in to cover the main hole.

Hint! Wedge her very favorite yummy tidbit in the little hole at the small end. If your dog can't get it out herself, she'll think you're the greatest when you dig it out for her as a final special treat!

Alternative Meal Kongs:

For pooches with loose poops, substitute boiled chicken and rice or mix it in with kibble and canned food for the 2nd layer stuffing. Sticky rice is great for firming things up. Anything you feed her in a bowl can be adapted to a Kong!

Snazzy Snack Kongs (thanks to Auntie Jean Donaldson at the SF-SPCA):

Layer 1 (deepest): roasted unsalted cashews, freeze-dried liver bits

Layer 2: dog kibble, cookies or liver biscotti, cheerios, sugar-free/salt-free peanut butter, dried banana chips

Layer 3: baby carrot stick(s), turkey and/or leftover ravioli or tortellini, dried apples, dried apricots

Pack as tightly as possible. The last item in should be a dried apricot or piece of ravioli, presenting a smooth "finish" under the main hole.

A "Lite" Version

For cashews, substitute crumbled rice cake; for freeze-dried liver, substitute Caesar croutons; for peanut butter, substitute fat-free cream cheese.

Quick 'n Easy Snack Kongs:

Schmear cream cheese, liverwurst, or peanut butter on the wall inside the big hole and freeze it for an hour or two. Voila!

Or use the gooier foods (like those listed above, as well as canned food or baby food) to hold smaller nuggets in and give the dog side-polishing challenges.

Kongsicle for Summer Fun!:

Stuff with meat, mashed potatoes, etc. and freeze. Or, plug the small hole with peanut butter and fill the cavity with broth, then freeze – this one can be messy as it melts so best feed it to her outside!

OTHER INTERACTIVE PUZZLE TOYS:

The **Busy Buddy Twist 'n' Treat** (like purple UFOs) are great for serving up schmears as well as chunkier snacks.

Omega Paw Tricky Treat Balls (like red moonrocks) and **Buster Cubes** are great for dispensing kibble.

West Paw's Tux is a great way to make a poochy pop of drippier contents, like pumpkin, yogurt, or even and ice treat.