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Just Food for thought

Just Food For Dogs is changing the way consumers think about petfood with their human-grade, fresh/frozen formulas and a novel kitchen/storefront retail concept

BY Jessica Taylor Release Date: 09/05/2012 Comments(0)

'Unique' is often a word used to describe young petfood companies who enter the frozen/fresh segment of the market. The ingredients used are many times novel and always less processed, the packaging may be sustainable and the pet parents who buy their products love what they do for their dogs' and cats' health. And yet, Just Food For Dogs, the self-proclaimed "world's first dog kitchen" and a newcomer in the niche market just two years old, manages to be different.

Shawn Buckley, company founder, says his company's keys to growth are "filling the need in the market for something truly better. Not just a better marketing campaign for another kibble or can, but food that is demonstrably better. And continuing the excellent relationship we have with the board-certified oncologists, dermatologists and internal medicine veterinarians with whom we work." Buckley says he was spurred on to start his company when he decided to investigate just what his dogs were eating when he fed them commercial petfoods. "We think much of the public and many veterinarians seem to be asking of kibble and can, "Is this the best we can do?", explains Buckley. He found most ingredients, cooking processes and labeling practices to be lacking, and the growth in premium petfood segments inviting, and decided to start Just Food For Dogs.



Just Food For Dogs operates out of a kitchen that is also a storefront. Pet parents are invited to watch food being prepared or get their hands dirty and make the recipes (which the company makes readily available) at home.

"All of our food is made from ingredients certified for human consumption by the USDA and then balanced for dogs according to the most recent NRC standards," says Buckley. One of the owners and active partners in the business is Oscar Chavez, DVM, who is also a professor of Clinical Canine Nutrition. "We also employ a full-time registered veterinary technician who has spent her career focusing on canine nutrition," Buckley continues. "In other words, we have a very knowledgeable staff when it comes to canine nutrition." And that is very appealing to consumers, especially since the company operates out of a kitchen that is also a storefront. Pet parents are invited to watch food being prepared or get their hands dirty and make the recipes (which the company makes readily available) at home. "As sad as the recalls are, and as much as we would love for them to end, our business is thriving in part because consumers know they can trust what they see being made with their own eyes," says Buckley. "The phenomenon of 'local' does not only hold true for people food.

"The public is becoming more aware and more knowledgeable about dog food in general and that can only be a good thing for dogs everywhere," says Buckley of his company's success. "We are in the midst of opening our second location and in the early stages of locating the third location now." Just Food For Dogs hopes to continue to grow by opening additional kitchen/storefront locations where they sell products—five balanced dog food recipes, one remedy blend dog food, six treat blends and six supplements—directly to pet parents. Products can also be shipped anywhere, worldwide.



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The future for Just Food For Dogs looks bright, according to Buckley. "We truly believe in 20 years we are going to say, 'Remember when we used to feed our dogs those little brown pellets?'

No one is suggesting that kibble or cans will go away entirely, but a significant portion of the business will be delivered in another way," he concludes. "Fresh/frozen made from whole food is an excellent answer."

Business Basics

Headquarters: Orange County, California, US

Facilities: Newport Beach and West Hollywood (opening in December 2012), California

Officers: Shawn Buckley, founder

Sales: According to the company, sales of Just Food For Dogs products have climbed significantly month over month since inception without a single month of stagnation.

Brands: Just Food For Dogs custom-formulated dog foods, treats and supplements

Distribution: Just Food For Dogs products are available both through the company's



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official website and from their California-located kitchen/storefronts.

Employees: 26

Website(s): Justfoodfordogs.com, and visit Justfoodfordogs.com/our_story.php for a digital mini-magazine that covers the company's entire story

Q&A with Just Food For Dogs founder Shawn Buckley

Check out **the entire interview** with the founder of Just Food For Dogs Shawn Buckley to find out more about the company's interesting storefront/kitchen concept and their feeding pets better foods philosophy.

*Updated: Sep 14, 2012 This article appeared in **Petfood Industry, October 2012.** ©Copyright 2013, All Rights Reserved.*

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