**Baking for dogs- Battersea recipes (By Lucy Cullender, Emerson Park Academy)**

**Throughout the *several* lockdowns we have endured here in the UK, many people have taken up baking as an easy at-home hobby. Baking is a relaxing activity and should be enjoyed by all, including man’s best friend!**

During lockdown, I for one have been busy in the kitchen, testing some tasty homemade treat recipes from the Battersea Dogs and Cats Home website for my food-loving black Labrador, Max. For my dog, he tried quite a few foods for the first time from these experiences including carrot, banana and peanut butter (he was a big fan of the peanut butter to say the least but he definitely wasn’t loving the fruit and veg). This lucky lab was able to try Battersea’s biscuits and the birthday cake. He loved both and definitely wasn’t hesitant to eat the vegetables when mixed into the other tasty ingredients. My dog has become obsessed with peanut butter ever since but remember that not all foods we have are good for your dog.

If you decide to let your dog try peanut butter make sure it does not contain xylitol which is a sweetener that is extremely harmful to dogs, for them it can lead to seizures and death. Xylitol can also be found in sugar free gum: three pieces of this type of gum could easily threaten a 30kg dog’s life (like a Labrador). It is important to always do research before introducing a new food to your dog and for foods like peanut butter, it’s always a safer option to go with a dog brand of peanut butter, just in case, such as Peamutt Butter which can be found in a variety of shops such as Sainsbury’s and Pets At Home. If you are ever in doubt as to whether a food is safe for your dog, it is always best to check- it could save your dog’s life.

This was the first time making any sort of treat from scratch for my dog and they were perfect for special occasions (especially the birthday cake which he got to enjoy for his 12th) and go to show anyone can bake these for their furry friend. Neither recipe takes long to make and even if you aren’t the best at decorating, I’m sure your dog will be focusing on how it tastes instead.

The cake made his birthday feel even more special for everyone involved and made his day that bit sweeter. It was very creative, using mash for frosting and the sponge was light and tall. Although it contained carrot and banana, he still ate it eagerly. After all, it was his birthday so I added my own special touch to this recipe with a thin spread of peanut butter between the layers. Looking at him, it was clear to see he was loving trying something new and different, compared to his regular food and treats and this Labrador was definitely feeling the love this birthday thanks to his very first birthday cake.

For a slightly more often treat than once a year the Battersea biscuits got an even better reaction from him. Homemade was the way to go for dog treats! The biscuits formed a nice dough that was easy to work with and knead. It was fairly soft so quick to roll and cut out (any shape cutter works- I used a star cutter). Once cooked, they had a crunch but could also break easily into smaller pieces that can be used in Kongs and other toys. They were definitely my dog’s favourite and he would always lick up any crumbs he made afterwards. I will without a doubt *have* to make these again to keep my canine happy and to have some more fun baking in the kitchen during this ever-growing lockdown.

Both recipes were a huge success for my Lab and I would definitely recommend to anyone who wants to spoil their dog or cat! They also have some cat treat recipes on their website as well.

**Click these links if interested:**

* Battersea Website- <https://www.battersea.org.uk/>
* Dog Birthday Cake- <https://www.battersea.org.uk/about-us/news/dog-birthday-cake>
* Dog Biscuit Treats- <https://www.battersea.org.uk/homemade-dog-treats>