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Smart eating for man's best friend



Jennifer Cappuccio Maher Staff Photographer

Edward Mac prepares his Canine Culinary Creations for his dog, Sapphire.

By Diana Sholley
Staff Writer

When a 2-month-old German shepherd mix came into Edward Mac's life, both lives were changed forever.

"When I got Sapphire, the breeder told me to get food that had no wheat, corn or soy," said Mac, a 26-year-old La Verne resident. "It was impossible to find. I was frustrated. Then I thought, 'Hey, I'm a chef, I'll just make my own.'"

Mac, who spends his professional career preparing banquet feasts for celebrities and teaching his craft, embarked on a new culinary endeavor.

After researching canine dietary needs, reading several dog-based nutrition books and seeking guidance from veterinarians and dog training professionals, Mac started preparing quality custom meals for his new best friend.

"It's just like cooking for humans," he said. "I wanted the meals to taste good and be healthy."

He didn't know it at the time, but Mac was developing a menu for his current business venture, Canine Culinary Creations, which features custom-designed pet food using human-grade ingredients. Recipes are

KIBBLE COOKING CLASSES

Young Chefs Academy
514 W. 1st St.
Claremont
7-8:30 p.m. Feb. 20
Call for prices
909-625-7505;
www.youngchefsacademy.com

CANINE CULINARY CREATIONS

Edward Mac
626-376-2057;
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www.canineculinarycreations.com

taste-tested and approved by Sapphire. The idea of starting his own doggie-dining business actually came when Mac took Sapphire for obedience training classes.

The instructor explained she taught on a treat/praise system, and getting the dog's attention is crucial. The more pleasing the

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treats are to the pup, the more focused it will be and the faster the training will progress.

Mac made his own doggy treats from beef, chicken and dolphin-free tuna with a high liver content. Sapphire loved them and responded well to the tasty incentives.

At 6 months old, Sapphire is a well-behaved pup that obeys numerous commands in both English and Chinese (Mac's mother is from Taiwan).

Mac shared his homemade treats with several dog trainers and friend Monique Eagan of Ontario, who was having a heck of a time training Sitka, her Siberian Husky.

"Sitka is incredibly picky," Eagan said. "She's not interested in the treats you buy at the store. That made her so hard to train."

It was a different story when Sitka was exposed to just the scent of Mac's homemade treats.

"I didn't get past the front door when she was sniffing at my purse," she said. "She loves them. They have made such a difference. Since I've been using them, I've had a lot of success in training her."

Eagan texted Mac to let him know the difference the treats made in Sitka and wrote, "These treats are like crack for dogs."

Mac knew he had something, so he started his Canine Culinary Cuisine with "Puppy Crack" as his featured item. Other meals offered include Hunter's Delight with venison, potatoes, pears and carrots, Farmer's Basket with

chicken, barley, eggs and spinach, Friday Night Supper with pork, green beans and brown rice, and Salmon Special with salmon, rice, peas and yogurt.

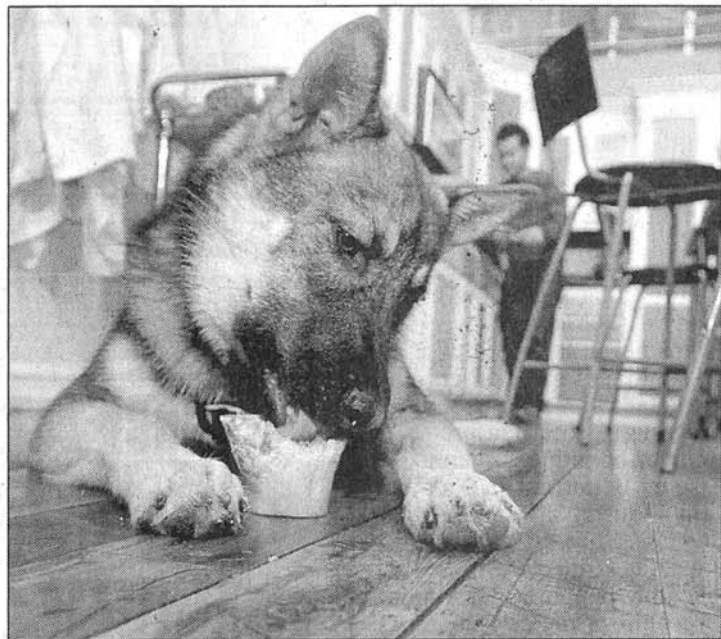
Mac uses fresh, natural ingredients that he either grows in his extensive garden or buys from Trader Joe's and Amy's Farm in Ontario. He cooks using a special oil mixture with extra omega oils and adds bone meal fortified with calcium.

He sells his made-when-ordered dog meals of 10 pre-packed cups for \$25, and suggests that, depending on the size of the dog, owners mix the meal — one part cooked culinary cuisine to two parts kibble. Mac doesn't sell kibble, but he has created a healthy rice and barley oat-based kibble recipe and he will teach a Kibble Cooking Class at the Young Chefs Academy beginning Feb. 20.

Through Culinary Canine Cuisine, Mac offers dog training and pet sitting services. He also sells various products and takes orders at Claremont's Green Market on Fridays in the city's Village. His goal for 2010 is to have a dozen outlets at farmers' markets in Los Angeles and San Bernardino counties and is currently interviewing those interested in market distribution of his products.

"I want to raise the bar for dog food," he said. "When food is good you don't need as much of it, so the cost is comparable. I just figured that I was making this kind of food for my dog, so I might as well sell it so that other people can benefit from it."

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Sapphire chews on a bone made by her owner, Edward Mac, who makes Canine Culinary Creations dog food and dog treats.