



How can palatants enhance the appeal of gently cooked meals?

As pet owners seek healthier, more natural options for their pets, the appeal of home-cooked style meals has surged. But what makes these meals irresistible?



Yolandi van der Vyver

Wet Technical Application Specialist

AFB International

afbinternational.com

Over the years, pet nutrition has evolved from feeding table scraps and home-cooked meals to biscuits, kibble, wet pet food and, now, a return to home-cooked style meals. Why, after decades of innovation and refinement in pet food production, has the industry circled back to this approach? The answer lies with the consumer.

Pet owners today are faced with an overwhelming array of options when it comes to pet food, from kibble to raw, freeze-dried and wet diets. The decision-making process can be daunting. With so many choices available, it's challenging to determine which is best, and navigating the many labels and packages often adds to the confusion. This is where gently cooked products come into play.

Trust and transparency

Gently cooked pet food has seen rapid growth in recent years, and its success can be attributed to a few key factors. First, the straightforward packaging and labeling make it easy for pet owners to understand what they're buying. When opening a package, the sight and smell of the food enhance the trustworthiness of the product. Additionally, the inclusion of vegetables and herbs appeals to pet owners' desire to provide the healthiest options for their pets.

Building the right customer experience

While gently cooked meals tap into the desire for wholesome, home-cooked food, they come with some challenges from a palatability perspective.

The cooking methods used in this category – such as steaming, sous-vide or low-temperature cooking – result in different flavor profiles and levels of palatability. Also, the appearance of the food, including its color and texture, can be influenced by the cooking method.

To enhance palatability, the right palatants are essential. These must be adjusted to the cooking technique to help achieve the ideal flavor profile and improve the product's attractiveness.

The goal is to replicate the experience of home-cooked meals, where the smell and appearance of the food are just as important as the taste. When pets enjoy every bite, it not only makes them happy, but also reinforces the trust pet owners have in the product.

Expert collaboration

AFB International specializes in collaborating with manufacturers to find the most suitable palatants for gently cooked pet food products. The company's team of application technologists is dedicated to helping producers select the best flavor solutions, and offers training and insights tailored to each manufacturer's needs. ♦