

Raw Cat Food Information

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Disclaimer

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Always seek advice and answers from a qualified professional such as your veterinarian.



Introduction

This document and the [accompanying Excel spreadsheet](#) were created after numerous months of research and experimentation; as a means for me to record and analyse information gleaned from my experiences. While I do not have first-hand experience with all aspects I touch on, I do trust the vast knowledge of my fellow Lairians (members of the [SphynxLair Community](#)), who are always an invaluable source of information (much of which is incorporated into this document).

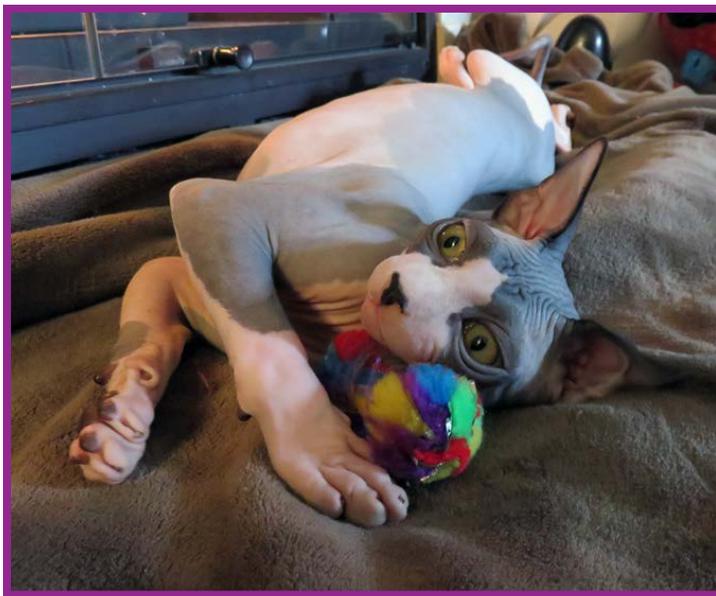
This document is designed to assist those who are considering or are curious about a raw or homemade cat food diet for their feline companion(s). When I first began researching a raw cat food diet I was overwhelmed by the sheer volume of information available and found it difficult to locate summaries or comparisons that answered my numerous questions; the Lairians were incredibly patient with me and I am forever grateful.

The information presented here is not the only method to provide a raw or homemade cat food diet. Moreover, I do not dwell on certain details as such is available via the resources I cite throughout this document. The intent is to provide clear and concise preliminary information. I strongly encourage everyone to perform their own research so that they may make an informed decision regarding the feeding of their feline(s).

Finally, individual experiences vary, and it is therefore important to remain open to customization and adaptation in accordance with your particular situation.

Gratitude

A huge thank you to the outstanding members of the [SphynxLair Community](#), who have been so very helpful and supportive. You are truly the most amazing online family I've encountered.



And thanks to my little naked Lord, Maximillian von Strange (Max), who endured some dietary trials and tribulations early on in his raw transition, and who also continues to teach me so much.

Basics about a Raw Cat Food Diet

Three Raw Food Diet Options

1. Make food with raw ingredients (Animal plus Nutritional Supplements).
2. Make food with raw Animal (with or without bone) plus Nutritional Mix-in (e.g., [Better in the Raw](#) or [Alnutrin](#)).
3. Purchase ready-made commercially available raw food (freeze-dried and/or frozen-fresh).

Is One Better Than the Other?

In a perfectly ideal situation, making cat food with raw ingredients (option 1 above) is the best.

You know exactly what goes into the food, and you control every aspect of the food; very important for cats with special needs such as health concerns, weight maintenance, and also finicky eaters.

However, not everyone is in an ideal situation, and there are numerous variables that differ from person to person, city to city, country to country and so on. Some variables to consider are:

- Cost and accessibility of meat, nutritional supplements, nutritional mix-ins, and/or ready-made commercial food.
- Freezer space available for storing food.
- Sufficient time and resources for making food.

Do not be afraid to experiment with the different options above, and even within each option. The absolute most important aspects of any raw food diet is:

Do your research.

&

Know the source of the ingredients you use.

Not all butchers are the same, not all organic chickens are the same, not all freeze-dried raw food is the same, and not all supplements are the same and so on.

I ran out of meat once and opted to try a different butcher as mine was closed. Max refused to eat the meat, which gave me pause to consider that the chicken was perhaps not as fresh as it should have been. I didn't press the issue and tossed the meat (unfortunately).

Animal Percentages

Regardless of the raw food diet pursued, the following are optimal animal component percentages as they closely approximate what cats would eat in the wild such as mice and birds:

- 80–85% meat (muscle meat, heart, fat, skin, sinew, tendons, cartilage, and soft connective tissue)
- 10% edible bone
- 5% liver
- 5% organs (lung, kidney, pancreas...) or more meat

The fat content of the meat should comprise of no more than 20%. Skin is considered a fat.

Calcium

CALCIUM IS NOT AN OPTION and must be added via edible bone or calcium supplement (freeze dried bone, egg shells or bone meal). Edible bone is preferable but is not always a viable option.

In your research you may encounter the concept of **calcium:phosphorus** ratio, which roughly translates to **bone:meat** ratio. If using edible bone as a calcium source, note the above percentages but always follow your chosen recipe's instructions.

If using freeze dried bone, egg shells or bone meal, understand first that the ideal **calcium:phosphorus** ratio in cat food is **1.0-1.5:1.0**. This ratio gives some leeway. Also, growing cats generally require more calcium than adult cats.

Secondly, elemental calcium content varies between different calcium supplements. Likewise, phosphorous content varies between different proteins and also their organs.

DON'T PANIC!

There are wonderful people on the Internet who have performed the calculations for you! I highly suggest reading [this page at CatCentric.org](#) for more information on the subject of edible bone alternatives.

Constipation and Diarrhea

If your cat is constipated on a homemade raw food diet, consider decreasing the amount of edible bone or calcium supplement by a little bit.

If your cat has persistent diarrhea on a homemade raw food diet, ensure that the liver percentage is not more than 5%. If the liver percentage is spot on, consider adding ¼ tsp. psyllium husk powder to a meal as needed.

Nutritional Supplements

While cats are carnivores, they cannot subsist off meat alone. They do require additional nutrients which may be obtained from various sources. Following are some of these sources:

- Raw egg yolks or the entire egg with the white cooked (think of soft boiled eggs).
- Egg shells instead of edible bone.
- [Calcium Hydroxyapatite](#) (freeze dried bone) instead of edible bone.
- [Bone Meal powder](#) instead of edible bone.
- [Taurine](#).
- [Fish oil](#) (krill, sardine, or salmon -- **DO NOT** use cod liver oil).
- [Vitamin B-50](#).
- [Vitamin E](#).
- [Lite iodized salt](#) (with iodine).
- [Psyllium husk powder](#) (optional).
- [Lysine](#) (optional, but strongly encouraged).

Follow the amounts cited in the recipe(s) you choose.

[NOW](#) supplement products are linked above as they are available in most countries. However, purchase any reputable brand provided the item is the same. Use the above links as a guide.

These supplements are often present, in one form or another, within nutritional mix-ins. Follow the recipes provided with the mix-in of your choosing; some mix-ins require that you add other ingredients such as liver or fish oil.



Nutritional Mix-ins

Nutritional mix-ins are not supplements themselves, nor are they intended to be sprinkled on top of food. Like a recipe, the mix-ins require that you add meat, water, and other ingredients in precise amounts.

The mix-ins contain some of the nutritional supplements noted in the previous section.

Most Popular

- [Better in the Raw](#) (add meat WITHOUT bone only).
- [Alnutrin](#) (add meat WITHOUT bone or meat WITH bone depending on the Alnutrin mix-in product type purchased, plus also add liver and fish oil).

Other Options

- [TC Feline](#) (use meat WITHOUT bone, plus also add egg yolk and liver).
- [Feline Instincts](#) (use meat WITHOUT bone, plus also add liver and fish oil).



Always investigate and compare the mix-ins to find the best one for you.

Meat Notations

- Use chicken livers (for vitamin A & D) and hearts (for taurine) as opposed to beef livers.
- Do not use pork as it upsets most feline tummies.
- Chicken, rabbit, duck, and turkey are good starting meats.
- Meat may be ground, chunked, or even served in pieces.
- Meat may be fully or partially cooked (instead of raw), but **NEVER** cook bone.
- Introduce new meats (e.g., beef, rabbit, lamb, camel, kangaroo, venison, etc.) after 1 month or so on a poultry and/or rabbit diet.
- Introduce one new meat at a time (e.g., wait a few days before introducing another new meat).
- Provide a variety of proteins on a daily or every several day basis.
- Do not feed seafood more than a couple times a week. Feed a little bit of seafood once in a while as a treat instead.



Supplement Notations

- Add 250-500 mg of lysine to the cat food twice per day to boost your feline's immune systems.
 - 500 mg of lysine twice per day when your feline companion is unwell (e.g., URI, sniffles and so on).



- Add ¼ tsp. of psyllium husk powder to a meal for firming up stools (as needed).
 - [Pure pumpkin](#) (NOT the pie mix) may also be used to firm up stools.



In addition to lysine twice per day, Max receives ¼ tsp. of psyllium husk powder once per day as without it his stools are sometimes soft.

Sourcing Raw Cat Food & Raw Cat Food Ingredients

Ready-made Commercially Available Raw Food

The availability of ready-made commercial raw food will vary not only from city to city, but country to country. Ready-made raw food is either frozen-fresh or freeze-dried.

Visit several local pet stores and take note of what they carry. Is any of the food locally made? Which ones are brought in from outside the city or even country? Ask the pet store staff which foods are most popular, why, and what they would recommend.

There is nothing more powerful than word-of-mouth testimonials.

Make notes of the available brands, return home, and perform research on the Internet. Visit the company's website, search for any recalls or problems, as well as general reviews of the products.

Nutritional Mix-ins

The two most popular nutritional mix-ins are [Better in the Raw](#) and [Alnutrin](#). Availability and shipping costs will vary from region to region. These are ordered directly from their respective websites and are not available in stores.

Search the Internet for any recalls or problems, as well as general reviews.

There is a sheet in the [Raw Cat Food Information](#) Excel spreadsheet titled **Mix-in Analysis**. This information may assist you in making a decision with respect to which mix-in you choose to use.

If you wish to perform a cost analysis between Better in the Raw and Alnutrin (product and shipping costs will vary depending on where you are located), there are two sheets in the aforementioned Excel spreadsheet titled **Better in the Raw** and **Alnutrin**. Enter your cost for the mix-in as well as any additional ingredients required and relevant shipping. A final cost per day is calculated for you.

Nutritional Supplements

Nutritional supplements are often available at your local vitamin or health food store. There are also many vitamin stores online.

Research the quality of the brands you choose, and also search for best prices.

Animal Ingredients (Meats)

There is much to consider, however, it cannot be stressed enough to forge a good relationship with the butcher you ultimately choose to provide you with meats, bones, livers and so on.

Research online for butchers and restaurant suppliers in your area. Visit their websites, and phone them for prices. And, of course, search the Internet for general reviews of those butchers. In the [above-mentioned Excel spreadsheet](#), there is a sheet titled **Meat Vendor Price Comparison**. Use this to take notes when communicating with the vendors you research.

In Vancouver, BC Canada, I discovered a meat provider to local restaurants that was also open to the public in a cash and carry capacity. [Hills Foods](#) has been very helpful and provides a variety of quality proteins at reasonable prices.

Some butchers will grind meat and/or bone for you. Some will even pretty much make the cat food in the meat/liver/bone ratios that you request. It doesn't hurt to ask, but not every butcher provides such service.

The meats should be fresh. If they are provided frozen, inquire after their freezing process (fresh meats should be frozen ASAP once cut or ground).

Some countries also have vendors who will deliver frozen meat directly to your door. This may also be worth considering.

As always, research research research.

Making and Serving Homemade Cat Food

Depending on the type of food you are making (with or without a nutritional mix-in), as well as other factors, consider the acquisition of the following items to assist you in your cat food making.

Preparing Meat, Liver, and Bone

- grinder
- food processor
- very sharp knives

If your butcher has agreed to grind your meat and, if used, bones, then you need not purchase a grinder.

If you do wish to grind your own meat and/or bones, there are a number of different grinders on the market. One of the most popular is the [Tasin TS-108 electric meat grinder](#). Consider visiting local restaurant supply shops as well. Make sure the grinder can grind chicken and rabbit (if you decide to feed rabbit) bones.



Liver is easily decimated in a food processor. If you do not have a food processor, use your grinder.

Instead of grinding, you may chunk the meat, but do not forget that you will also need to add liver, bone, and supplements. Chunking meat by hand can be an arduous chore, even with a very sharp boning knife. A food processor may assist in the task of chunking meat; take care not to end up puréeing the meat (unless your cat prefers this).

Creating the Supplemental Slurry

- bowl (glass or stainless steel)
- whisk
- fork
- food processor
- stick mixer with whisk attachment

Whether you make cat food with individual supplements or a mix-in, water is combined with other ingredients.

Smaller batches are easily mixed with a bowl and whisk or fork. The resulting slurry mixes best in a glass or stainless steel bowl.

A food processor makes very short work of larger batches. Although, take care of the maximum amount of liquid your food processor can handle. I use the S blade with my [Breville Sous Chef](#) for quick mixing of the slurry. A stick mixer with whisk attachment, such as the [Breville Control Grip](#), mixes water and mix-in powders quite well.



If you are using a food processor and liver is in your recipe, mix water, supplements, and liver together.

Mixing It All Together

- large stainless steel bowl
- large spoon
- potato masher
- countertop mixer



Depending on the quantity you are mixing, you may opt to use a bowl and a large spoon. An enormous bowl and a potato masher ([this one from Oxo](#) is fabulous) make for a formidable mixing system as well.

You will make very short work of the task if you have a countertop mixer with a steel beater (e.g., for pastry, bread, heavy batters). My [Breville Mixer](#) is perfect for mixing 3 lbs. of meat plus the supplemental slurry.

Food processors do not lend themselves very well to mixing unless you want everything puréed.

Storing the Cat Food

- freezer baggies
- widemouth mason jars
- sharpie markers
- dry erase markers
- 1/3 cup scoop or large spoon

There are many ways to store your cat food. Try to make as many weeks as possible in advance; as much as your freezing space will allow.



Some people use freezer baggies that hold a single or double portion each. The other benefit of using freezer baggies is that the baggie and its contents will form to fit around pretty much anything else you may have in the freezer, which may potentially save some space.



If you are not a fan of using plastic, glass jars are excellent. I really enjoy using [250 mL widemouth mason jars](#); each 250 mL jar will hold ½ lb. (8 oz.) of food. Do not fill the jars completely to the top as the food will expand a little bit during the freezing process. You do not need to pressure seal the lids; simply screw the snap lids on top. Also, a 1/3 cup scoop is perfect for scooping the cat food from the main bowl into the widemouth mason jars.

If you use more than one protein, write the protein on the glass jar's snap lids with a dry erase marker. If you use freezer baggies, write on the baggie with a sharpie marker.

Feeding Regimen

- Kittens — 3-4 times per day.
- Adults — 2-3 times per day.

Generally speaking, feed as much as your cat(s) will eat in about 20 minutes, which usually translates to 50-150 g (2-5 oz.) per meal. Most cats self-regulate and do not over eat.

It's usually unnecessary to measure out extremely specific amounts. Age and activity will also affect quantity required. In time you will learn how much is consumed at each meal. Kittens and growing cats will continuously ramp up their requirements, and from time to time confuse you by eating less for a while.

If you must regulate meal portions, particularly in adult cats, keep a log of amounts fed until you have arrived at the optimal portion size for your cat(s). Begin with 3 or 4 oz. per meal and maintain this portion for 10 days. After 10 days you will notice any weight increase or decrease. Increase, decrease or maintain this portion amount as needed. Repeat until you have determined the ideal portion size.

Avoid combining dry kibble with a raw food diet as some cats develop tummy issues as a result of the different digestion rates between the two types of food. Free feeding is not necessary with a raw food diet. However, if desired, provide dried raw food when unable to feed fresh.

Serving the Cat Food

- stainless steel serving bowls
- fork
- baby cloths

Maintain a refrigerator temperature of 4°C (40°F). This temperature is optimal for storing fresh and thawing meats.

Depending on your storage method, the food will take anywhere from half a day to a full day to thaw once moved from freezer to refrigerator. A 250 mL jar of frozen cat food takes approximately 18 hours to thaw in the refrigerator. Do not thaw frozen cat food outside of the refrigerator.

Max goes through 2 jars of cat food per day and when I empty one of them, I pull another one from the freezer and put it in the refrigerator so that there are always 2 jars in the refrigerator in different states of thaw.



Most cats are not fond of cold food, therefore you may wish to consider warming the food.

If you store a single serving in a baggie, place the baggie in a bowl of hot water for a few moments, massaging the bag to heat the food through.

If you store the cat food in a container, place an approximate serving amount in a [stainless steel](#)

[serving bowl](#) (along with any lysine or psyllium husk powder desired). Fill a slightly larger bowl with hot water. Set the bowl of food on top of the bowl with hot water and push the food around with a fork until warmed; this will also mix the lysine or psyllium husk powder into the food at the same time.

Serve and marvel at your little carnivore!

Wrap or contain any leftover food and place in the refrigerator for the next meal.

Do not use thawed meat that has been in the refrigerator for more than 2 days.



As plastic can easily harbour bacteria, use glass and/or stainless steel for cat food preparation, storage, and serving.

Quick Face Wipe

Kittens are notoriously messy eaters and often wear remnants of their meal in their nose, on their chin, and so on.

Consider wiping their face after their meal with a soft baby wash cloth run under hot water.

I keep a pile of baby wash cloths on hand for après meal face wipes. Sometimes Max treats it as a game and I end up chasing him around the house with a warm wet cloth that becomes cold by the time I catch him (silly cat)!



Transitioning to Raw

Age to Start Raw

A raw or homemade cat food diet can be fed to kittens and cats from almost any age. If you have adopted a kitten, consider maintaining the same diet for the kitten as the breeder had been feeding. This will ease the transition of the kitten into your household and provide some familiarity. After approximately one month, THEN consider beginning a raw diet.

Enticement and Transition

Before you invest a considerable amount of money in equipment and ingredients, try small batches of food first. Do not be discouraged if your cat immediately refuses raw or homemade cat food. Poultry meats do not have much scent, and therefore may not be as appealing to your cat.

To entice your cat to eat the raw, try adding a quarter packet of [FortiFlora](#) on top of the food, or add a little bit of the wet food your cat was previously eating. Some individuals have had success with adding a little bit of tuna oil from a can of tuna.

If you have had to add FortiFlora or wet cat food, make notes of the amount required to entice your cat, and very slowly diminish the amount over the span of weeks or even a month.

If you wish to be particularly firm, skipping a meal or two in a row will not cause undue stress to your cat. But do not repeatedly deny your cat food or for more than a 12 hour period.

Intolerances and Allergies

Specific protein intolerances and allergies are not entirely uncommon (poultry is a surprisingly common intolerance). Intolerances typically manifest themselves via diarrhea and/or vomiting. Allergies reveal themselves by way of skin reactions (e.g., hives, bumps).

Cats will often favour certain proteins over others. It may take some time to discover the proteins that your cat enjoys. Try to find at least a few different proteins that you can rotate your feline companion through.



Above all, have patience, and be willing to adapt and try different things.

Vomiting and Diarrhea

When initially starting a raw diet, as with any food changes, your cat may experience some diarrhea. Do not panic.

Consider feeding ½ tbsp. pure pumpkin or ¼ tsp. psyllium husk powder (add to food) to rebalance their digestive tract. If your cat still has diarrhea episodes after a couple of weeks, then perhaps the raw diet is not for them, or a change in the type of raw diet is necessary.

Cats will also vomit if they eat too quickly. If you have a voracious eater on your hand, consider the acquisition of a [challenging feeding bowl](#) to slow them down.

It took a few months to transition Max completely to a raw diet. This included discovering that he was intolerant to poultry. Thereafter I learned that his favourite proteins were camel, venison, and kangaroo. I am grateful that we now have an established diet routine.



In Closing

Do You Have Questions?

Visit [The SphynxLair](#) community! They are very friendly and a font of information!

Raw Food Resources

- [Sphynx Lair Raw Diet Section](#)
- [Cat Info](#)
- [Cat Nutrition](#)
- [CatCentric](#)
- [Feline Nutrition](#)

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