



Dogs are genetically programmed to hunt for their food, just like their wild ancestor the wolf. Once the dog became domesticated, humans started selectively breeding for particular traits so that they could perform jobs, like Labrador Retrievers for retrieving fowl and German Shepherds for herding sheep. But today, our pet dogs do little more than play, eat and sleep, and that can be pretty boring for a dog who was bred to do so much more!

Zoos have struggled with these same problems with their wild inhabitants and so zookeepers have learned to improve the quality of life for many of their predator and primate species by giving them puzzles to solve in order to obtain their food.

We can do the same for our canine companions. Interactive food toys like the Kong® and Kong® Wobbler, the WestPaw Toppl, and the Busy Buddy® Twist ‘n Treat are great ways of providing

It's Okay to Play with Your Food

meals and snacks to our dogs that will give them mental stimulation. Just as you may do chores around the house to get your allowance, so can your dog work on puzzle toys to get his food!

One thing to note, though... start easy, not packing too tightly, until your dog gains confidence and skill. Otherwise, he may get frustrated and give up. But then, to add to the challenge, you can freeze the Kong or put the Wobbler out on the lawn so that, as the food falls out, he'll have to hunt through the grass to find it! (For some Kong stuffing recipes, go to <http://mywoofgang.com/handouts/KongStuffingRecipes.pdf>)

With just a little practice, your dog will learn to thoroughly enjoy unpacking stuffed puzzle toys and finding the hidden food treasures within!

** Always introduce new food, toys, training with adult supervision.*



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