



Horse Treats 101

Most tack and feed stores carry an overwhelming variety of horse treats in every shape, color and size these days, but making your own at home is simple and affordable.

By COREE REUTER-MCNAMARA



Creating your own horse treats is as easy as whipping up a batch of cookies. You don't have to be skilled in the kitchen—horses don't mind if your morsels are a tad misshapen or a little overcooked. Plus, you don't need any special ingredients; a few cups of grain combined with flour and molasses make a quick, easy treat.

Where Do I Start?

The first step is determining what your particular horse enjoys eating. Most horses will snack on apples and carrots, but there's no reason to limit yourself in the kitchen. Here are some suggestions:

- Dried fruit (pitted dates, raisins, etc.)
- Sugar cubes
- Apples
- Carrots
- Peppermints
- Sunflower seeds
- Grapes
- Bananas
- Peas
- Green beans
- Lettuce
- Celery
- Watermelon rinds
- Squash
- Mango (not the pit)
- Breads/bagels
- Molasses
- Honey

By comparison, you should avoid feeding your horse:

- Garlic or onions
- Turnips
- Radishes
- Avocado
- Cabbage/kale/chard/collard greens/brussels sprouts
- Broccoli
- Tomato and potato plants and any member of the nightshade family, including peppers, should be avoided at all costs
- Rhubarb, especially its toxic leaves and roots
- Pits of peaches or cherries

And finally, these things may cause positive drug tests:

- Tobacco (consumed, not inhaled)
- Carrots in very large quantities (over 5 lbs. per day)
- Persimmons
- Chocolate
- Licorice
- Cinnamon
- Nutmeg
- Hot pepper/chili flavored products (chips, etc.)
- Caffeinated tea, coffee or soda
- Alcohol



Follow Directions Or Wing It?

While there are dozens of treat recipes available online, it's quite easy to experiment on your own. In order to create a tasty treat, you need to have a solid (grain, oatmeal), a filler (bran, flour), a "glue" (molasses, corn syrup, honey), a liquid (water, juice, beer), and, if desired, a garnish (carrot, apple, peppermint, sugar, salt). Here's a recipe modified from a simpler version found online:

15-MINUTE HORSE TREATS

Ingredients:

- 4-5 cups oatmeal
- 2 cups molasses
- 3 cups grain
- 2-3 cups flour
- Splash oil (I used olive, but corn would probably be better)
- 1 cup water
- Salt for garnish

Directions: Pre-heat the oven to 350 degrees. Mix all the dry ingredients together and then add the liquid ingredients. Mix thoroughly until the entire mixture is coated and moist. Add either liquid or solid until you're able to form the mixture into small balls. Roll balls lightly in salt then press onto a cookie sheet, or you can spread a layer of the mixture on the cookie sheet to cut later into bars. Bake for 15 minutes.

Reader Favorite Recipes

HORSICLES

From Chronicle Forums member MistyBlue

Ingredients:

Any type of juice or Gatorade or melted molasses
Water
Medium-sized plastic containers with lids
Chunks of carrot, apple, etc. (optional)

Directions: Fill containers half or 2/3 full with liquid of choice, then top off with water. (If you're using molasses, you'll want to be sure to use warm water.) Close lid, shake well, then place in freezer.

On a hot day, pop the now-frozen treat out of the container and into your horses' feed trough or water buckets. You can also put several of them into the water trough itself to cool and flavor the water. If you have a chest freezer, use the same recipe in a two-gallon bucket for more fun.

BEER BRAN MASH

From Chronicle Forums member OMalley Cat

Ingredients:

8 cups bran
8 cups oats
Pinch of salt
Hot water
1 can beer

Directions: Add enough hot water to moisten ingredients, add your pinch of salt, mix, and then let steep for 30 minutes or until cool enough to feed. Add a can of beer moments before feeding.

HORSE CANDY

From Chronicle Forums member PaintedBones

Ingredients:

2 cups corn syrup
1 1/3 cups sugar
2 cups corn meal
2 cups sweet feed
Peppermint or other flavoring (optional)

Directions: Combine corn syrup and sugar on the stove over medium heat. Stir until sugar dissolves. Cover and cook for 8 minutes, then uncover and cook until 300 degrees or hard crack stage. Turn off heat. Add corn meal and sweet feed alternately and stir until combined and well coated.

Pour into well-greased bundt pan and allow to harden. Then remove candy from pan and run a string through the middle. Hang within reach of your horses, and watch them enjoy!

NEW ENGLAND VALKYRIES VAULTING HORSE COOKIES

From vaulting club president Mari Badger

Ingredients:

1 1/2 cups rolled oats
1 1/2 cups Cheerios
1/2 cup flax seed
1/2 cup other grain (we use psyllium, you can use cornmeal, Grape Nuts, wheat cereal, etc.)
3/4 cup whole wheat flour
1/4 cup water
1/2 cup corn or light olive oil
1 tbsp. salt
1 cup applesauce
1 cup grated carrots or apples
2/3 cup molasses
(You may also need some white flour)

Directions: Mix these ingredients together with your hands. Really mix. Whole grains vary widely in their ability to hold/absorb water, so the dough varies too. Some get stickier as they absorb liquid. If it doesn't hold a nice ball easily after a while, add some regular white flour, which acts as glue. If too stiff, add just a little more water.

Oil a cookie sheet. *Do not* preheat your oven—it's not necessary. Drop spoon-size balls onto the well-oiled cookie sheet and press flat until they're about 1/3 inch thick.

Set oven to 325 degrees and bake for 10 minutes. *Be careful not to burn.* If the cookies are not crisp on the outside, flip them at this point and cook for 3 more minutes. Flip again for 3 minutes more if you want an even tougher cookie. With subsequent batches, flip half-way through and reduce total time by 1 minute (oven loses heat when you open it).

The goal is crunchy on the outside, a little chewy inside—but if your horse likes a really hard, crunchy cookie, lower the temperature to 250 and bake your finished cookies for 10 more minutes. Cool completely, then store in airtight container. Makes five to six dozen, depending on the size. If your horse has been especially good, you may want to try an icing. Combine 2 cups confectioner's sugar (sift after measuring), 2 tablespoons milk, 2 tablespoons light corn syrup, 1/2 teaspoon salt and a handful of crushed peppermints, then mix with a hand-mixer until smooth.

Drizzle on cookies (or brush on or dip) and sprinkle with more crushed peppermints, which will stick to the icing. Allow to set for two hours in a cool place.