



Lucy Postins, pictured here with her Fido, Taro.

My **Business** Has Gone to the Dogs

The **Honest** Kitchen

FIDO Friendly visits with Lucy Postins, founder of The Honest Kitchen®.

right from the human food chain—though of course they are formulated for pets to eat!

We're committed to honesty, transparency and integrity of both ingredients and production methods.

FF: What type, if any, research did you do in assessing the consumer market?

LP: I honestly did no research whatsoever, which goes completely against what all the business textbooks will tell you! I started The Honest Kitchen® not as a money-making venture but purely out of a need to solve a problem. Right from the beginning and to this day, instinct guides us rather than too much market research—though as time's gone on, we have really strengthened connections with consumers and focused on them to guide us for many projects, like new products.

so we definitely don't have the big budgets of the main players in our industry and that can be a hurdle. This has meant we've relied to a large degree on grassroots marketing rather than lots of advertising, to get the word out. But this has served us very well and actually helped us to grow at a more manageable, organic rate.

Word-of-mouth has been tremendous, especially when people see their friends' pets with dramatically improved skin and coat or energy levels after starting on our foods, so that has been key to our growth. Our Facebook page is alive with interactions, sharing of ideas and wonderful photos of our customers, so that's a fantastic link for us.

We've also been very fortunate with some wonderful media coverage including CNN, various magazines, CNBC and Food Network.

One hurdle is that our food is so different

The Honest Kitchen® is known for superb dehydrated pet foods and being well-respected pawlanthropers in this doggy gone world. Recently *FIDO Friendly* had the opportunity to sit down with founder, Lucy Postins, and unleash the nitty gritty.

FIDO Friendly: What made you start your business?

Lucy Postins: I started the business in 2002. I had been preparing homemade raw diets for my Rhodesian Ridgeback puppy, Mosi, and found it to be really time consuming and messy. With a kitchen covered in pureed broccoli, beef and all sorts of other things, I began to think of a way to make fresh, healthy meals for him that would still be the same quality as those in my own kitchen—but more simple and easy to prepare. That's where the idea for dehydration came from: real, whole food ingredients with only the water removed!

FF: How did you come up with the name?

LP: Our name, The Honest Kitchen®, really came about to emphasize the human-grade nature of our products, that they are the very same ingredients you'd find in your own kitchen. Our foods are actually produced in a human food facility, right alongside foods people eat. There are no ingredients in our foods that are not fit for human consumption, and we buy them

“DEHYDRATION ITSELF IS A NEW CONCEPT FOR MANY PEOPLE...”

But in the beginning, I just did my own thing because I saw a need, and I found people were receptive to it as soon as I told them. The company was originally intended just as a small cottage industry that I would run from home. In chatting to a friend at my local dog park, I explained what I had developed, and she immediately wanted to carry the food in her local, natural pet market. I'd set up a website with Paypal as our payment method and placed a pretend order to make sure it was all working. When I logged in to the back end to make sure the order had gone through, there was already an order from a customer in Virginia! I have been so fortunate in the company really having a life of its own and chartering its own course.

FF: What were the biggest hurdles in marketing your products?

LP: We remain a small, family-owned business

from most others in the industry, and that we've been the pioneer for our category. It does take a lot of explaining to people what the product is and how it's better than conventional feed-grade foods. Dehydration itself is a new concept for many people, so the education piece is key for us in marketing.

FF: What is on the horizon for your company?

LP: We have several exciting product developments planned for the next 18 months or so including two new medicinal teas, a grain-free food for dogs made with beef, and a new grain-free cat food recipe. We're also working on a very exciting new patent-pending system that's really going to further revolutionize the way people feed their pets. More news will follow on that in the New Year. *The Honest Kitchen*, www.thehonestkitchen.com. 