

Farm-to-table dog food gaining popularity

By Craig Giammona, BloombergBusiness

Richard Thompson cuts into a tube of Chunky Chicken and Turkey Recipe, just off the manufacturing line. The chief executive officer of a small gourmet-food manufacturer is obsessed about the quality of his products, so he uses only fresh ingredients, eschews preservatives and limits the time meals sit on shelves to make sure they're eaten while still exploding with flavor.

His manufacturing chief, Michael Hieger, picks up a slice and pops it into his mouth to prove just how delectable it can be. Says Hieger: "Tastes just like Thanksgiving."

We're talking dog food, of course.

The impromptu tasting occurs on a tour of the Freshpet Inc. factory in Pennsylvania which cranks out the only industrial refrigerated pet food on the market. The company is among a group of fast-growing innovators in the \$23.7 billion pet-food industry that is winning the hearts – and opening the wallets – of dog and cat owners with healthy chow you'd almost believe is as good as what you put on your dining-room table.

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