

Bacon and Eggs



Somewhere, at some point in time, someone decided whatever was inside that white oval-shaped object that was left behind when the chicken walked away would be good to eat. You can almost imagine the scene. A caveman is hunting in the deep primeval forest for the third unsuccessful day in a row. He dreads going back to the cave empty-handed, but the only tracks of prey he has seen are days old and the only live prey were also being tracked by the large tigers with whom he competes regularly. He stops to rest and disturbs a wild bird that flaps angrily away. In the nest she recently vacated, the hen left several small white stone-like objects. The caveman picks one up, shakes it, and breaks it. Thinking the insides look promising, he picks up the rest of them and carries them home for his family to eat.

What happens next may be fun to speculate about, but what we do know is that either that caveman or that cavewoman shared the information about the new food source they discovered. Maybe when all the cavewomen got together to share their favorite water buffalo recipe, she spoke up and shared her triumph. Maybe it was more of a secret shared with her daughter, who passed it on to her daughter until eventually the secret spread among the human community. We definitely know the information was eventually shared.



Later, someone decided cooked pig belly went well with those eggs, especially if it was sliced thin and fried to a crisp tasty strip of what we call bacon. The discoverer of that combination also apparently shared it or we would be eating liver and onions for breakfast.

Ahhh, there's another important combination - liver and onions. Not one of my personal favorites, I nevertheless know that the two go together like, well, like bacon and eggs. It makes you wonder what combinations preceded the successful combination: liver and asparagus? Liver and Brussels sprouts? How about liver and rutabaga? Sound tasty?

The very fact there are so many that love liver and onions today means that someone tried various combinations, found one that worked, and then shared that information. They probably also shared the information about what didn't work – stay away from liver and rutabaga, they said – very bad.

While the complexities of dog breeding don't lend themselves to comparison to breakfast food, there is a compelling corollary here. Sharing information about what works and what doesn't is part of what makes us human. It is part of what keeps us at the top of the food chain and the open environment conducive to sharing is what makes keeps us there.

As a breeder, wouldn't you want to know that breeding these two lines will consistently produce beautiful pups who excel in the breed ring, score high in the obedience ring, drive fast and accurate to the fallen bird in the field or lake, and then go home to be a true and loyal companion?

Wouldn't you also want to know that combining two lines will result in five fatalities in utero and, of the three survivors, one will be PTS at 9 months, one will live a strictly regimented life due to health issues, and one will survive to age 12 as a beloved family pet? Would you still breed that litter?

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Of course, we can't ever know the actual outcome of any breeding, there are just too many unknowns. We are fortunate, however, in that we live in a time when science and technology lend itself to the art of successful breeding more than at any time prior. A time when we have tools available that could only be dreamed about by earlier breeders.

We can now definitively test for conditions that have plagued and stymied dog breeders for ages via DNA profiles. We can now tell whether a black dog will ever produce chocolate, before he is even bred.



If all the variables in good breeding were reduced to a known genetic component, then sharing our successes and failures would be moot. You want to breed this dog to that bitch? Get a genetic profile of each, plug the results into a computer program written for that purpose, and print out the results! Long before the bitch comes into season, you would know the odds of producing that next specialty winning dog...and what health issues you would be invoking or avoiding.

We're not at that point yet and I'm not even sure we would ever want to be. However, there are still many issues within our breed where it is necessary, even crucial to the long term viability of our breed, to share what information we can. Hip clearances, elbow clearances, eye examinations, heart tests, and yes, that DNA profile all make up the total package of information that lends itself to knowledgeable risk analysis.

We're a long way from that group of cavewomen sharing their favorite recipes around a campfire, or at least I hope we are. We're still human and we still have a desire to multiply our successes and divide our failures through sharing with our friends. All I'm saying is to widen that circle. Share your successes and failures with everyone that shares a common goal with you – breeding Labrador Retrievers that meet or exceed the breed standards. Share that information with those who will come later, so they don't have to re-crack that egg.



Susan Mouw, President

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