



Entrepreneur

Bone *Appétit!*

Living North learn why (hot) dogs are going barking mad for this fresh, dog-friendly ice cream made in Yorkshire

Abbie Wills is the mind behind Doggie's Delights, which started as a side hustle in Harrogate and now supplies stockists across North and East Yorkshire. She previously worked with animals at Warley Cross Kennels & Cattery in Brandesburton, and completed a bachelor's degree in Bio-Veterinary Science, focusing on canine nutrition.

Armed with her knowledge of dogs' diets, Abbie came up with the idea for Doggie's Delights in 2021. 'I was visiting cafés that were selling human ice cream, but people were buying that to give their dogs,' she explains. 'That's obviously full of fat, cream and sugar, so it's not very good for them so it got me thinking about a healthier alternative for dogs. I wanted to have a look to see if there was something that could be done, and it turns out there was...'

After experimenting with dog-friendly ice cream recipes, the first to taste test Abbie's creation was her Labrador, Pippa, then she did a trial run. 'I shared that on Facebook, and people went crazy for it,' she laughs. 'That's when I

realised this could turn into something good, so I built my website and refined the product I sell now, then stockists started to get in touch.'

Abbie's ice cream is homemade in her kitchen. 'It contains fat-free yoghurt and I add lactase to it which is an enzyme which dissolves the lactose to make it lactose-free, so the dogs can digest it, otherwise they get an upset stomach,' she explains. 'It's so important, otherwise this ice cream is no better than what they were having before. I would hate to negatively impact a dog's health and that's why I've opted for the fat- and lactose-free alternatives. From there, I add the vanilla flavouring, or 100 percent peanut butter, and put it all in an ice cream maker and then into the plastic-free tubs which I label myself.'

'I used to have three flavours, but I've since reduced that to two because the banana flavour wasn't that popular,' admits Abbie. 'The peanut butter is definitely more popular than vanilla but because it contains peanuts, it was important to have a plain flavour for dogs who don't like peanuts and for owners who might be allergic.'



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The ice cream is just 59 calories per tub and Abbie’s recipes ensure that each tub contains 100 percent natural ingredients, free from added preservatives and non-natural sugars. She recommends storing the ice cream at -18°C.

It’s no surprise that Doggie’s Delights ice cream is most popular in summer. ‘When people are out for dog walks, or if it’s a hot day, they’ll stop at cafés and if they have an ice cream, their dog will want one too,’ says Abbie. ‘It does cool them down, and this is a healthy alternative to the human ice cream they’d normally have.

‘It sells pretty quickly, especially on hot days. The ice cream is harder than human ice cream, but you can’t make it creamy and soft because that is full of cream and sugar. Sadly, you can’t have the best of both, but the dogs don’t seem to mind.’

Abbie had to do a lot of trial runs to get everything right. ‘There was a lot to learn and a lot of trial and error to get that perfect,’ she says. ‘This is my first business and I’ve done it by myself. I didn’t really have anyone to ask for advice. I’ve had to figure it all out on my own but I’m really proud of myself. It’s not something I’d normally say, but to start from nothing to have stockists and meet with other business owners is something I never thought would happen. It’s taken off quite quickly.’

Current stockists of Doggie’s Delights include Oh My Dog in Beverley, The Farm Shop @ Skirlaugh, Posh Paws in Sutton-on-Hull, Slingby’s in Harrogate and PJ’s Ices in Knaresborough.

As her business continues to grow Abbie would like expand her range of stockists, but she continues to work full-time and juggles this business alongside. ‘People have been in touch with me about stocking in Sheffield so I need to work out if that’s viable, delivery-wise,’ she says. ‘I’m getting a lot of interest, which is great, but I’m trying to juggle a full-time job too. I would love to keep going but that might mean looking at hiring staff, or at least a delivery driver.’ Dog-lovers, watch this space.

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