

CLAIMS

1. A method of manufacturing a dry pet food, comprising receiving unprocessed meat, grinding the unprocessed meat, forming the ground meat into a slab or a plurality of strips, passing the formed meat through a steam cooker and cutting the meat into chunks, and drying out the chunks.
2. The method of claim 1, comprising mixing the ground meat with less than 20% by weight dry ingredient prior to the forming of the ground meat and the dry ingredient into the slab or plurality of strips.
3. The method of claim 2, wherein the dry ingredient comprises at least one of a dried vegetable, dried carbohydrate, dried cereal, or dried legume and dried fruit preparation.
4. The method of claim 2 or 3, wherein the step of grinding the unprocessed meat comprises coarsely grinding the unprocessed meat, mixing the coarsely ground meat with the dry ingredient, and finely grinding the mixture of the course ground meat and the dry ingredient, prior to the step of forming.
5. The method of any preceding claim, wherein the step of forming the ground meat is performed with an extruder that does not impart any significant heat to the ground meat through friction or shear forces, such that the formed meat is in an uncooked state.
6. The method of any preceding claim, wherein the cutting of the meat into chunks is performed after the formed meat has passed through the steam cooker.
7. The method of any preceding claim, comprising cutting the slab into a plurality of strips prior to the steam cooking by using a slitter.
8. The method of any preceding claim, wherein the cutting of the meat into chunks comprises cutting each strip into multiple separate lengths.
9. The method of any preceding claim, wherein the steam cooker comprises a conveyor belt configured to carry the slab, plurality of strips, or chunks, as the case may be, along and through a steam filled enclosure.

10. The method of any preceding claim, wherein chunks exit the steam cooker onto a transfer belt, and wherein air fans or water sprays directed towards the transfer belt are used to help cool the chunks prior to the step of drying the chunks.

5 11. The method of any preceding claim, wherein the drying of the chunks comprises reducing a moisture content of the chunks from greater than 60% by weight to less than 12% by weight.

12. The method of any preceding claim, wherein the drying of the chunks comprises a
10 first stage of outer skin hardening and a subsequent stage of full chunk drying.

13. The method of any preceding claim, wherein the formed meat comprises a moisture content of greater than 40% by weight, preferably greater than 60% by weight.

15 14. The method of any preceding claim, further comprising coating the dried chunks with a liquid fat or oil.

15. The method of any preceding claim, further comprising packaging the dried chunks into containers, for sale, and optionally pasteurising the dried chunks before the
20 packaging.