

THE EATINGWELL DIET: 7 PROVEN STEPS TO A NEW, TRIMMER YOU p. 44

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DESSERTS**

CONTRIBUTORS



Our new contributing editor, **CHERYL STERNMAN RULE**, wears many hats: nutrition reporter, recipe developer and cookbook consultant among them. But what she really loves is introducing people to unfamiliar foods like wheat berries

(*Meet the Real Whole Wheat*, p. 66) by incorporating them into tasty and healthful dishes. Rule, who also wrote "Dog-Gone Those Pounds!" (page 14) for this issue, lives in San Jose, California.

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DISPLAY UNTIL MAY 1, 2007

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[LIFE SCIENCES]

DOG-GONE THOSE POUNDS!

IS YOUR PUP A PERFECT PARTNER IN WEIGHT LOSS?

Just as Americans have become increasingly overweight, so too have their pooches packed on pounds: roughly 40 percent of dogs in the U.S. now are considered overweight. So when Topeka-based Hill's Pet Nutrition (a pet-food company) contacted Robert F. Kushner,



says Kushner. But there's one difference, he says: "People cause pets' obesity." Ignoring portion sizes, offering copious treats and skimping on dog walks all contribute to pets' added girth.

Research shows that when people embark on weight-loss programs with supportive friends, they do better. Would it matter if the friends happened to be furry and walk on four legs? Kushner wondered.

In a study published last October in the journal *Obesity*, Kushner and his colleagues followed 36 people paired with their dogs and 36 people without pets through a year-long weight-loss program. Both groups met regularly with a dietician, who counseled participants on healthy eating, setting calorie goals and ways to increase physical activity. A veterinarian taught pet owners about dog health and suggested activities to foster bonding with their pets. (The dogs also consumed a calorie-controlled diet.)

Turned out, the dog owners didn't lose *more* weight than their "petless" peers. They did, however, say that the dogs made exercise more enjoyable. Seeing their pets slim down also inspired them to stick with their own healthy habits.

BOTTOM LINE: "If you don't have someone to walk with, get a dog," says Kushner, the proud owner of Cooper, a spotted Havanese. Or borrow one: walk an elderly neighbor's pet or exercise rescued dogs at a shelter. —Cheryl Sternman Rule

Top: KEN BURRIS; bottom: ILLUSTRATION BY CHRIS PYLE.