

# Raising My Furry Children

By  
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## Things He's Eaten

One Friday I treated myself to a box of soft-baked blueberry snack bars from a local store. I brought them home along with many other groceries, opened one bar (each was wrapped in a foil-type paper) and ate it in front of Speckles. I even shared a bite with him, since he loves fruit.

He watched me place the box of bars in a dish drainer basket on the sink – way at the back, out of his paw and nose reach. He watched me eat two more over the next day and each time, place the box back in the drainer basket.

One day I took a bar out of the box and did not share it with him. Instead, I packed the bar up with other items I needed to take with me in my car that afternoon.

When I returned home, the scene I found was impressive, so impressive that I stood for several minutes examining the evidence.

I knew a mess waited for me when Speckles met me at the back door as I arrived. He usually makes his getaway quick when he's tore something up, ate something or pottied on the kitchen floor. That day, he nearly knocked me down trying to get out the door.

The remaining blueberry bars had all been removed from the box and carefully pulled from each individual foil pouch. Somehow, with his large paws and teeth he pulled the seam on each packet along the entire length until the bars were exposed. Not one piece of paper or foil was found. Just perfectly torn pouches.

Nearly every crumb was consumed, except a few pieces that blended in with the dark linoleum on my kitchen floor. Those bits of evidence he stepped on and squished into the floor.

At that point in Speckles' life, I had been writing down all the things he had strategically "gotten into" over the years and ate off the kitchen sink. That list, below, excludes the many times he was able to hop up and down like a child while placing his front paws and legs on the sink surface and reach the cat's dry food bowl. With enough hopping and grunting he was able to tip the bowl, dispense all the crunchies and lick them up.

The list of what Speckles had eaten over the years included:

1 raw steak left in aluminum foil on the stove, in preparation for cooking

12 marshmallow Peeps in the shape of bunnies, followed that same year by 6

6 marshmallow Peeps in the shape of gingerbread men

20 small peat pots I planned to plant seeds in

1 box of instant potatoes

1 loaf of bread, followed by half of a loaf at a later date

4 English muffins

5 blueberry bagels

1 packet of flavored instant rice mix

1 packet of flavored fettuccine Alfredo noodle mix

1 small packet of Gummi Bears

1 package of Chips Ahoy (extra chocolate chunk) cookies.

With a taste for fruit and vegetables, Speckles has pretty much prohibited me from growing vegetables in the backyard.

I often find him sticking his nose into grapevines along the fence and pulling ripe grapes from the vines. He also watches me pick red raspberries and licks his lips waiting to sample one.

This year I grew one tomato plant in a pot on my patio. I staked the plant up straight and watched it flourish, producing little green tomatoes. The first one turned ripe late in the season and I picked it – a perfectly round tomato the size of a baseball. I placed it on a lawn chair by my back door and went back to do some other gardening.

Something made me look up from my chores to see Speckles standing across the yard with something red sticking out of his mouth. He saw me look at him and he froze, the kind of reaction he has when he wants to tease me and run away.

"What do you have in your mouth?" I asked him.

When I started walking towards him, Speckles jumped and quickly consumed my tomato, stem and all.

I watched two other green baby tomatoes on the plant and hoped they would mature. One day Speckles was nosing around the plant, sniffing the stem and ripening fruit. I scolded him and he ran.

The next day, my two green tomatoes were gone, picked perfectly clean from their stem.

I know who was to blame.