



Think you have a hard time getting dinner on the table some nights? Try working in the zoo's commissary, where zookeepers prepare 100 different diets a day! From the largest elephant to the smallest insect, every animal in the zoo is fed their own species-specific diet, accounting for 100 pounds of "salad," 15 different types of fresh fruits and veggies, 30 types of grain, 280 pounds of meat and 3 tons of hay per week – and that's not even the full menu!

What is the zoo's commissary?

Simply put, the zoo's commissary is a kitchen – but it's not your ordinary kitchen. Roger Williams Park Zoo's commissary, located in the basement of the Tropical America Building, is fully equipped to prepare over 100 different diets every day for the more than 1,000 animals (representing about 165 different species) that reside at Roger Williams Park Zoo. And those diets include some pretty exotic ingredients!

What's on the menu?

From the largest elephant to the smallest insect, every animal in the zoo is fed their own species-specific diet. On a typical day, the commissary staff will prepare approximately 80 lbs. of produce, 200 lbs. of grain and 120 lbs. of meat. This does not include the mealworms, crickets, pinkies, mice, rats and hay that the zoo also provides for its animals. Each of the zoo's three elephants alone, for example, eats 120 pounds of hay per day.

Other novel zoo food includes ferret chow, polar bear chow, Zu-Preem canned primate food, herring, tofu, ground oyster shell and Purina pigeon pellets, to name a few. Special vitamins and supplements are also added to some animals' diets.

What are some examples of animal diets?

Here are a couple of examples of the "dishes" prepared by commissary staff:

Herbivorous Reptile Salad

- 10 lbs. mixed spinach, kale, romaine & leaf lettuce, chopped or torn into large pieces
- 1 lb. carrots, grated
- 1 lb. sweet potato, grated
- 2 lbs. green peppers (remove the stalk & seeds, cut in half and then sliced)
- 4 lbs. broccoli (heads sliced & stalks halved or quartered and then sliced)
- 2 lbs. firm tofu, broken into small pieces

Bat Nectar

- (2) 46 oz. cans nectar (peach, pear or apricot)
- 3 Tbsp. wheat germ
- ½ cup dry milk
- 1 ½ cups baby cereal

¾ cup sugar

Mole Rat Diet

¼ cup banana (mashed)

¼ cup apple (finely grated & chopped)

½ cup carrot or sweet potato (finely grated & chopped)

Juice of one orange

1 cup dry baby cereal

1 cup crushed rodent blocks (grated in food processor)

Mix well. Measure out 1 Tbsp. and shape into a ball and freeze.

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