

# New Find in Search for Puppy Face That Never Fades

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By SUE MANNING Associated Press

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Imagine the ideal designer dog. It would be smart, healthy and hypoallergenic. It would have the yap bred out and longevity bred in. And, most important, it would never lose its puppy face.

Enter the "cava-poo-chon." The breed is the newest and latest in the decades-old search for the dog-face fountain of youth and perfect pet accessory. But the American Kennel Club does not recognize the new trend as an official breed, and one expert calls some specially bred small dogs expensive "gimmicks."

"There's always been a market for these forever-ish young dogs," said veteran trainer Steve Haynes of Fidelio Dog Works in Austin who is working with 50 first-generation cava-poo-chons. "Until recently, specialized dogs like miniature Yorkies and miniature Maltese were the go-to dogs."

The cava-poo-chon is a cavalier King Charles spaniel and bichon frise mix bred with a miniature poodle. With the help of a geneticist and reproductive veterinarian, the tribrid or "triple cross" was created by Linda and Steve Rogers of Timshell Farm in Pine, Ariz.

With a price tag ranging from \$2,000 to \$3,500, the cava-poo-chon combines the best of the three breeds, Linda Rogers said. She added that there is no reason they can't live for 20 years. The Rogers' offer a choice of color and two types of coat — curly or very curly, she said.

So far, 58 families have returned to get a second cava-poo-chon, and 12 of the dogs have been certified to work in nursing homes and hospitals as therapy dogs, Rogers said.

Amy Wolf of Austin says she found her perfect dog in the breed.

"I can't tell you the number of times a day I look at her and say, 'You are so cute.'"

Not only that, her 3-year-old named Callie has become the love of her husband's life — despite his allergies — and enchanted all their new neighbors. She hired Haynes as a trainer.

"Never have we had a more loving, sweet dog. She wants to say hello to everyone," said Wolf, who moved into a new home with her husband two months before getting Callie. "We've met tons of people while walking her. We feel much more connected with this neighborhood than the previous one, all because of her. She makes us more approachable, and we feel a lot safer."

The popularity of the baby look for dogs started more than a half-century ago with mail-order teacup pups advertised in the backs of magazines. Yorkies, Maltese and Pomeranians were popular for a while, and recently there have been hybrid hounds "with cutesy names that end in '-oodle,' '-uddle' or '-poo' that come with thousand-dollar price tags," said author and certified animal behavior consultant Darlene Arden of Massachusetts.

Arden said she was unfamiliar with the cava-poo-chon, though she applauded the use of a geneticist.

But she condemned "gimmicks" that some breeders and groomers use to attract unwitting buyers.

"There is no such thing as a teacup anything," Arden said. "It is a market term used by backyard breeders and commercial breeders so they can breed the smallest dogs that shouldn't be bred and sell them for a whole lot of money. These dogs usually end up having health problems and most veterinarians don't want to touch them because the organs are so small."

The American Kennel Club does not recognize the cava-poo-chon.

"AKC does not recognize cross-bred or mixed breed dogs as official breeds," spokeswoman Lisa Peterson said. "These dogs are the product of two purebred parents of different breeds, resulting in a litter of mixed breed puppies, not a new breed, according to our requirements."

But Brande Bradshaw of Austin thinks Bridgette, her 6-month-old cava-poo (there is no bichon in her), is the perfect dog.

"I have been blown away," said Bradshaw, who also hired Haynes as a trainer. "She is amazing, the cutest puppy I've ever seen."

Bradshaw flies frequently for her job as a technology saleswoman, and she leaves Bridgette at day care, where the 10-pounder is a favorite.

"Every time I log in, she is running around having a blast," Bradshaw said. She sometimes feels like Bridgette has forgotten about her until pickup time, when Bridgette spots Bradshaw and "runs full-speed ahead, her tail going a million miles a minute, right into my arms."

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Online:

— [www.timshellfarm.com](http://www.timshellfarm.com)

— [www.fideliodogs.com](http://www.fideliodogs.com)

— [www.darlenearden.com](http://www.darlenearden.com)

— [www.akc.org](http://www.akc.org)