



Apple Strudel 336709: What to Expect

Apple Strudel is a graduate of the Behavior Modification Program and needs a special home. Apple Strudel is a shy but sweet girl who needs a family that has the time and desire to allow her to acclimate in her own time. Once she knows you are her friend she loves being pet and playing with toys. She may never be a social butterfly with everyone she meets, but she will bond with her new family when given time to acclimate.

Apple Strudel came to OHS from the home of an overwhelmed cat caregiver and we don't have much history on her. When she arrived, she displayed fearful behavior, crouching low in her kennel, cowering and running away any time the staff attempted to handle her. It was clear she was very scared and overwhelmed with her current situation so the decision was made to place her in our Behavior Modification program. The environment in the BMOD program is better suited at helping cats feel comfortable in a shelter environment. With the larger kennel space, access to windows, quieter environment and increased one on one time with the team, we set out to learn more about her and help her overcome her fears.

Apple Strudel was nervous for the first week in BMOD and spent most of her time hiding in her bed and watching us with wide eyes. In the beginning, she would back away or run if we got too close but we understood this was her way of communicating that she was scared. We would talk softly to her every day and leave treats in her kennel to build a positive association with people. We found out pretty quickly that she loves treats and she started to associate that people visiting her meant she would get treats. She also showed an interest in playing with toys. As we would soar the wand toy through the air, she would stalk and pounce on it with great delight. Though she began to trust our presence and took treats and toys when offered she continued to be hesitant with hands approaching and would back away. We worked on building trust by introducing a Touch tool. A Touch tool is anything that can be considered an extension of your hand. In her case, we used a back scratcher. As we brought the scratcher close, she would lean forward to sniff it. We then gently rubbed her cheeks for a second then rewarded her bravery with a treat. It didn't take long for Apple Strudel to understand that touch was something she liked and she now accepts and loves being pet by the staff that have befriended her. She also showed curiosity and interest in the other cats in the BMOD program so we allowed her to have playdates with them. She chirps and murmurs at them, follows them around and is often seen snuggling with them. Being around other cats helped her feel more confident and comfortable in her environment.

Apple Strudel has made tremendous progress here and is now happy when staff visit with her. She enjoys receiving cheek and chin scratches, playing with toys and hanging out with the other kitties. She will do best in a calm, quiet home with a kitty friend and a family that has the time and patience to help her acclimate. If you have a soft spot for sweet, playful, sensitive yet brave kitties, then Apple Strudel is the one you've been looking for.

Her new family should expect that she will hide for a few weeks, possibly longer. You'll need to introduce her to new things slowly. Apple Strudel typically runs and hides when overwhelmed or scared, so it's important to not overwhelm her as she adjusts to her new home. It's important to provide her with a small room with appropriate hiding spots for her to relax in, such as her own hidey bed. Hiding spots that are confined to a tight spot and out of reach from you will make it difficult to build a bond with her. **She should not be given access to the whole home setting until she has acclimated to one room. The room you set her up in will be the catalyst for how quickly she acclimates.** Start thinking now which room in your home would be best for Apple Strudel to settle into. If it's a bedroom, can she get under the bed or dresser making it difficult to spend time with her? If it's a laundry room or bathroom will the constant in and out of people and noises associated with these rooms be too much for her? By having a room without a lot of foot traffic and with appropriate hiding spots, it will allow you to work on building a relationship. While in her hiding spot, use calm voices and offer tasty treats to show you are not a threat. Place a small amount of a wet food or a treat on a spoon and offer it to Apple Strudel while in her hidey spot. Or toss her a few crunchy treats. Bring the laser pointer or wand

toy out and allow her to observe and engage with it. Over time, by continuing to do this, Apple Strudel will become more comfortable and recognize that yummy food/playtime = people, therefore creating a positive association between the two.

Here's how to help Apple Strudel during your first month together:

This step is crucial in helping Apple Strudel acclimate to her new home. Confine Apple Strudel to one cat-proof room in your house. Provide Apple Strudel with a litter box, food, water, and a bed. Ensure she cannot get to *inappropriate* hiding spots (under the bed, in a closet, on top of a cabinet, etc.). Provide her with a safe, comfortable hiding place instead like her cat carrier, a hidey-bed, or a large dog crate covered with a blanket. Once she is using the litter box, eating regularly, and coming out of hiding to play with toys, you can start introducing her to the rest of your home.

Spend time with Apple Strudel in her room. Don't force her out of her hiding spot. Instead, encourage her to come out on her own using happy talk, offering a Touch Tool, treats or toys. Once she is using the litter box, eating regularly, and coming out of hiding to interact with you, you can start introducing her to the rest of your home. Start by propping the door open and allowing her to come out on her own. Don't force it! If you come across something that you can tell Apple Strudel is worried about, allow her to hang back or hide if she chooses to do so.

Continue to provide a safe space. Even when Apple Strudel has started exploring the rest of the house, give her a safe space that she can retreat to. When she is in her safe space, insist that guests leave her alone and try to ignore her yourself. That way, when she comes out, you can reward her bravery with your attention.

No visitors (at first). Allow Apple Strudel time to adjust to your house, routine, and lifestyle before introducing her to new people. When you have visitors over, give Apple Strudel the freedom to make the decision to interact (or not!). Ask new people to ignore her – or if Apple Strudel seems curious or interested, have the new person toss her treats or offer a favorite toy. We want exciting, good things to come from new people.

Practice crate training. Leave her carrier out all the time, so it's just a part of her normal environment. Add a bed and keep the door securely propped open so she can go in and out on her own, making sure the door won't swing shut and frighten her. You can also clicker train her to run into the carrier on cue. Helping Apple Strudel get comfortable with her carrier will make it easier when it's time to visit the vet.

Visiting the vet: Unless it's an emergency, give Apple Strudel time to bond to you before taking her to the vet. Vet visits will more than likely be scary, but if she already trusts you, your presence may help her feel more comfortable. Patience will come in handy for you.

Apple Strudel is a cat that needs an understanding owner who has the time and desire to allow her to adapt in her own time. She may never be a social butterfly with everyone she meets but she will bond with her new family. Getting to know her and watching her come out of her shell will be extremely rewarding. Celebrate those small victories.

We're here to help!

We want Apple Strudel to be successful in her new home. We're available to answer questions via phone and email. Call the Behavior Helpline at (503)416-2983 or email Erika at erikas@oregonhumane.org to connect with the Feline Behavior Modification Manager.

Please keep in touch so we can continue to help you and Apple Strudel now and in the future. Please reach out if you have any questions or concerns – or just to give an update. We love to see photos and hear how our friends are doing!

Thank you for adopting from the Oregon Humane Society. Congratulations on your new cat!

Oregon Humane Society | 1067 NE Columbia Blvd. | Portland, OR 97211
Pet Behavior Help Line: (503)416-2983 | oregonhumane.org/training