

Name _____



What Does a Panda Eat?

Pandas are famous for their love of bamboo. In fact, bamboo makes up about 99% of a panda's diet. This means that pandas are mostly herbivores, even though they belong to the bear family, which includes many meat-eating animals. Pandas spend a lot of their time eating because bamboo is low in nutrients, and they need to eat a lot of it to stay healthy.

An adult panda can eat 20 to 40 pounds of bamboo every day! They use their strong teeth to chew the tough bamboo stalks, leaves, and shoots. Pandas have a special thumb-like bone on their paw that helps them grab and hold bamboo while they eat. This unique feature makes it easier for them to strip the leaves and eat the tender parts of the plant.

Even though pandas mainly eat bamboo, they are classified as omnivores. This is because they occasionally eat other foods, such as small animals or eggs, especially in the wild when bamboo is hard to find. However, these foods are only a tiny part of their diet, and most of their energy comes from bamboo.

Pandas obtain their food by searching through the forests where they live. They look for the freshest bamboo shoots and leaves to eat. Bamboo grows in many layers of a forest, so pandas sometimes have to climb trees to reach it. Their strong climbing skills help them find the best meals high in the branches.

Sadly, one of the biggest challenges pandas face is the loss of bamboo forests. As people cut down trees to build roads, houses, and farms, pandas have fewer places to find their favorite food. This is why many conservation efforts focus on protecting and growing bamboo forests. By saving these forests, we are also helping pandas survive.

Pandas are a great example of how animals adapt to their environment and find ways to survive, even when their favorite food is hard to get. By learning more about what pandas eat, we can better understand how to help these amazing animals thrive.