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Press release

Cheeky bear meets bamboo cake

Panda twins at Zoo Berlin are turning two years old

At birth, the pandas weighed about as much as a bar of chocolate, but since then Pit and Paule have put on weight and now weigh around 65 kg each. No wonder, pandas spend around 12 hours a day feasting. For their second birthday, the panda twins were surprised at breakfast with a special bamboo cake.

The panda cake differed from the birthday cakes we are used to, the two bright orange candles on the approximately 70 cm high cake were carved out of large sweet potatoes. "For a food specialist like the panda, we made a custom-made cake," explains Zoo and Tierpark Director Dr. Andreas Knieriem. Unlike a real cream cake, there were no confectioners, but zoo keepers and craftsmen from the zoo. "The cake not only has to taste good, we also wanted it to look good. We went through with the team in advance what had to be considered with the panda cake," explains zookeeper Norbert Zahmel. "Sharp metal, inedible plastic and dangerous snares could become a security risk and shouldn't be near our protégés," explains Zahmel. The bamboo cake was decorated with sweet apples, juicy panda biscuits and small beetroot cakes. Giant pandas feed 99% on bamboo and are adapted to the consumption of the low-calorie sweet grass. They have an enlarged carpal bone - a kind of extra thumb - that allows the bamboo sticks to be optimally grasped. Even though Meng Meng and the twins are offered a total of 60 kg of bamboo a day, Pit and Paule still occasionally drink milk from their mother.

The panda twins Pit and Paule are passionate about playing with each other, but their characters are quite different. While Pit literally hangs on Mommy's skirt and is much more eager to do the daily clicker training, the stubborn Paule is really cheeky. However, both bears regularly snatch the fresh bamboo from their mother's snout. "The three of them still get on very well with each other, but of course we know that the twins will have to go their own way in the medium term," explains Director Knieriem. "However, it is not yet clear when and where Pit and Paule will move," he adds. Usually, mothers and young animals separate at two to four years of age. So it may be that this will be the last panda birthday that Pit and Paule will celebrate in Berlin.



Background:

Germany's only giant pandas have been living at Zoo Berlin since summer 2017. On August 31, 2019, panda lady Meng Meng (8) gave birth to two baby pandas (Pit: 186 g and Paule: 136 g). The father Jiao Qing (11) is not involved in the rearing - as is typical for giant pandas. According to the last count of the global population, it is assumed that only around 1,864 adult giant pandas remain in their natural habitat. Therefore, the panda is classified as endangered on the Red List for Endangered Species of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). The Berliner Volksbank is the sponsor of the two pandas Meng Meng and Jiao Qing.