



Tia loves to snuggle into a fruit bowl which has now become her comfy bed

Made for Each Other Sophie & Tiny Tia

They are similar in more ways than one. **Farzana Contractor** discovers this when she sits in conversation and photographs the pretty lass, actress and singer Sophie Choudry and her adorable toy-like pup Tia. Truly, the easiest **dogs & more** shoot

PHOTOGRAPHS: FARZANA BEHRAM CONTRACTOR

I don't know if a pet chooses its prospective parent or a person about to become a pet parent chooses its pet, but it's uncanny how most of the times the two seem to be one. By which I mean similar in traits and characteristics, like, like poles attracting each other.

If tiny Tia seems so gentle and cuddly, Sophie herself is so soft spoken and appealing. Good-natured, good breeding. Needless to say both good-looking gals, too. They certainly suit each other immensely. Well-groomed, choosy-picky, endearing. I was so glad to make their acquaintance.

Sophie became a familiar face way back when she made an appearance on our TV screens as a VJ. She had a presence that soon made her a favourite and from then on until now she has made India her home. Sophie hails from London, it's where she was born and grew up. But once she decided to return to her late father's hometown, in 2003, her mother, Yasmin, after living abroad for 47 years, returned along with her to keep

Tia is one dog who takes time to stop and smell the flowers



her company, look after her. What would girls do without their mums! "I know," says Sophie batting her eyelashes and looking heavenwards, "I have the best mum in the whole world, she is amazing, I couldn't love her more!"

But who loves Sophie the most? "Has to be Tia!" gushes Sophie, "Except mum, no one loves me like Tia and she is my life."

Tia is a real cupcake. It takes just one look at her to fall in love with her. Totally. You want to just bundle her, smuggle her, kidnap her.

When I reached Sophie's home, Tia was patiently standing on the dining table, next to a huge fruit bowl, while Yasmin was busy putting bows in Tia's hair. Sophie was in her room, her two regular boys (Sanky and Tusshar), were giving finishing touches to her face and

hair. Once done Yasmin retired to her room to freshen up leaving Tia alone with me.

Not wary in the least, Tia at first cutely ensconced herself in the fruit bowl and later jumped into my arms encouraging me to pet her, mollycoddle her. I immediately gave her the title of being 'the most friendly doggie in the world'. From then on, till I left she was a total



angel. A dogs and more shoot has never been easier. So trusting is this little baby I could have walked away with her in my arms if Sophie would just look away for a moment! "Yes, everyone wants to take Tia away, but she is mine!"

So, has Sophie always been a dog person? "Oh absolutely. There were four before Tia, two Bichon Frise, a Doberman and a King Charles Cavalier." These were all in her London home. Since coming to live in India, she had been 'dog-less' for the longest time. After living in dog-friendly London, the idea of having a dog in Bombay with its lack of canine amenities did not find favour with Sophie, much as she did not like her status, of being "sans dog", as she puts it.

But one fine day, her neighbours, who are also good friends of Sophie's, got home a dog, which soon enough unfortunately for them, for some very valid reasons, had to go... Fortunately for Sophie they enquired if she would like to have the little pup. An irresistible offer, indeed! That's how Tia strolled into the Choudry household. From the backdoor!!

"And life has never been the same. There is so much joy around thanks to Tia. She brings such happiness and positivity into our home. She is the baby of the family and eminently spoiled. Yet, the discipline is maintained. I have seen in India, the



Tia is a fussy eater, happiest with the love and attention from Sophie



This is pure nirvana. Tia brings peace and happiness to Sophie's life



Two easy-breezy, pretty faces fit the frame; Sophie and Tia are a photographer's delight

culture is that servants mainly look after the dogs. But we, mum and I are totally hands-on. We have trained her, taught her commands. She is a good learner. So house-trained is Tia she will only go to the designated area to do her job!" Which is outside the main door, in a little balcony attached to the apartment. So when Tia needs to go do her thing, she goes and sits patiently by the main door, rarely even scratching at it, to be let out. Cute, for sure.

"She is sweet. Never gives me cause for any displeasure. She allows us to thoroughly brush her hair twice a day and brush her teeth every night. We bathe her at home, either mum or I do it. And when we do send her to

the groomers, for nail or hair cutting we bathe her and send her. With our brushes, our towels. Thankfully we have never ever found even one tick on her."

And that's something. But then most of Tia's exercising happens at home except for two short walks in one week. Fun outings for her are car drives. Also twice a day. In the morning when she goes to drop Sophie to the gym and evenings for her own personal drive around Bandra, where they live. "She loves that. The driver takes her at 5 pm to Pali Hill. She loves to hang out of the window, occasionally they will stop if one of her 'friends' are around. She comes back from these drives, really happy!" says the indulgent Sophie.

Tia wears booties when on her short walks, raincoat and rubber boots during the monsoons. She never wears doggie frocks, but does like ribbons and bows in her hair, which are taken off at nights so she can sleep comfortably. She has never been spanked (obviously), not even a newspaper tap on the nose. Her bark is rarely heard, if at all. She loves smelling flowers and happily sits in front of them doing so endlessly. But toys she loves even more, the hundreds that mama gets for her, she plays with for hours.

"Seriously, she does. Toys are a dog's best friend! And I keep getting new ones for her from all over the world, wherever I go to perform. Believe me, my own shopping has now taken a back seat," says Sophie. "Don't I know it," I reply mock ruefully.

For most pet parents nothing is more important than their canine babies. And food is the single most worrisome issue. "Oh yes, that is a big one!" says Sophie. "Tia has to be the most difficult eater on the planet. We do give her only home-cooked meals, but she is a moody eater. Even leaves chicken in the bowl! She is a small eater. Days she doesn't eat well her acidity level goes up tenfold. I am most troubled about this aspect. Thankfully, she has her favourites; she loves bone marrow, asparagus, cashews, almonds, watermelon, *paneer*. As for cheese, that's her biggest weakness!"

So there we were, Sophie and I, sitting at the dining table, yacking away about our respective babies, exchanging stories, while Yasmin plied us with yummy sandwiches and chicken patties, Tia of course kept us company, back in her favourite fruit bowl which is now her dedicated bed, listening in at our conversation, happy at all the praises being heaped on her.

After pack-up time, as my photo assistant and I were about to leave, I turned to look at Tia, give her one last wave, I saw she was out of the fruit bowl and on the sofa, very busy smelling the flowers. Ah, Tia, we should name a perfume after you!! 🐾



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Breed Profile

Miniature Pinscher

Jallikattu

Bull-taming or Shaming!

Pigeons

The intelligent Avians

Dog in the Bowl!

Tia, the best serving for Sophie Choudry