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Dining with Dogs Responsibly (and Legally) in Georgia

Dogs have always been our best friends, so it's not surprising that more and more restaurants are making strides to ensure their patrons can dine without leaving their fur babies at home. But with great change comes great liability. Here are some points restaurant owners should consider so dogs can dine without accident incident:

1. **Get approval from your local health authority.** Georgia law requires restaurants to obtain approval from the local health department before providing a dog-friendly dining space.
2. **Puppy-friendly dining areas must be outside.** The Georgia Department of Public Health prohibits dogs from dining inside a restaurant. In addition, dog-friendly areas must *only* be accessible from the outside, which means pet owners must not walk their dogs through any indoor dining areas to access a dog-friendly patio.
3. **Service dogs are welcome inside.** Dogs that are required due to a patron's disability and that are trained to perform a specific task are considered service animals. But remember, emotional support dogs are *not* service animals under the law and must remain outside.
4. **Keep your pup under control.** Dogs must be on a leash and under the owner's control at all times.
5. **Sorry, no lap dogs!** Dogs are not allowed on tables, chairs, or other furniture. Patrons must also ensure their dogs do not come into contact with clean linens, dishes or utensils.
6. **Do not feed dogs—even treats.** Dogs are not allowed to eat even in dog-friendly dining areas. Dogs are more likely to become aggressive around food and eating stimulates their digestive systems, making accidents more likely. If a restaurant wishes to sell or give away dog treats, they must be consumed off premises.
7. **Provide water outside of dining areas.** Dogs may be provided with water, but it must be consumed outside the dining area.
8. **Employees may not pet the dogs.** They may be cute, but employees should be trained not to pet, feed, touch, or handle dogs while working.
9. **Have a written policy.** If your venue has a dog-friendly patio, you must have a written policy that is shared with employees and employees must be trained on that policy.

Questions? Contact Stokes Wagner.