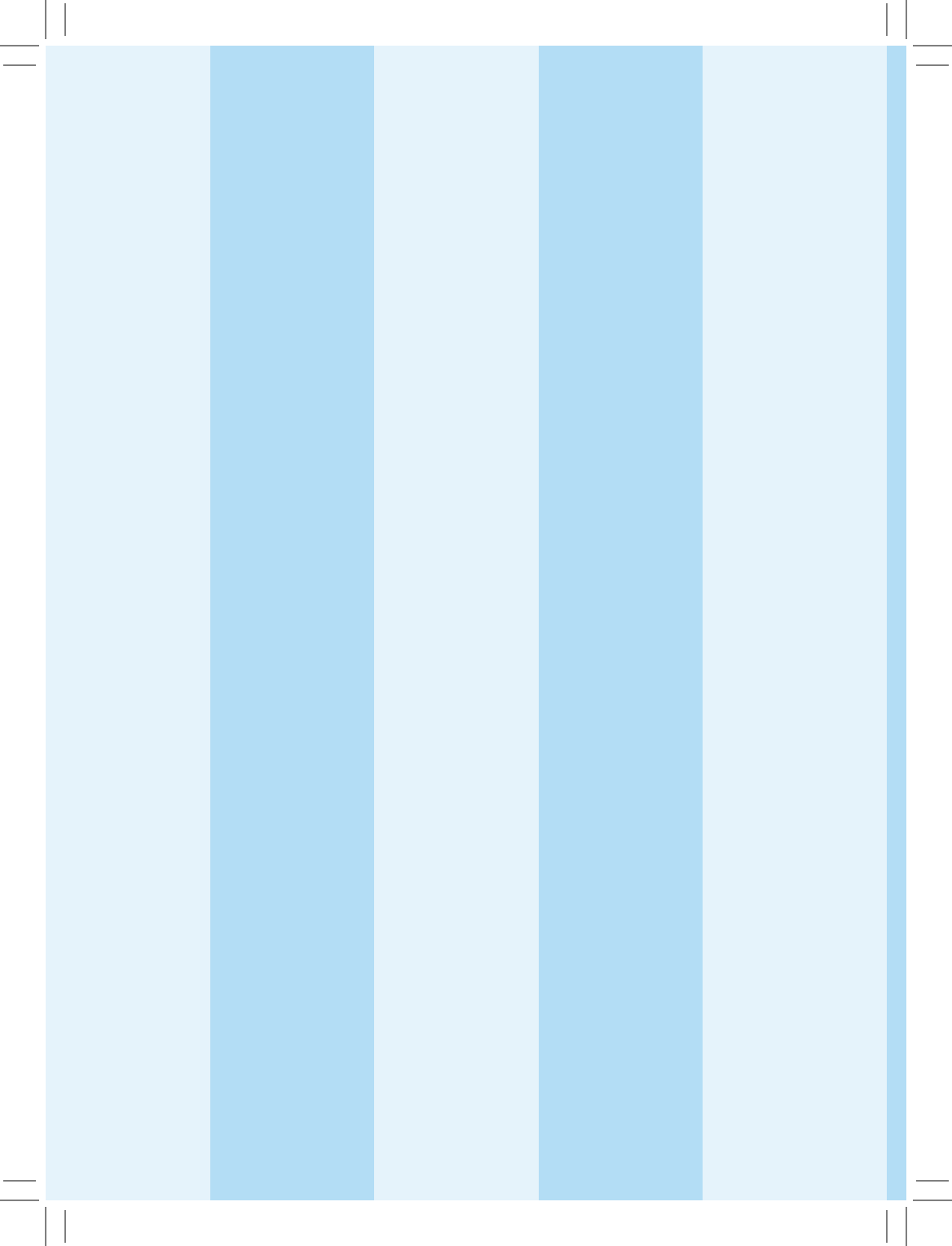


## PART 3

### *Etiquette Out and About*





## Chapter 13

### EATING OUT WITH *Elegance*

With the challenges of confined spaces, a busy wait staff, and diners who may not have expected to share their eating experience with four-legged patrons, only the most well-mannered and best-groomed dogs should be taken out to eat at an outdoor café. Even if the state or local laws permit, al fresco dog dining is offered at a restaurant's discretion, so make sure your restaurant allows canine customers before unleashing your pet on an unsuspecting eatery.

#### **DINING WITH DOGS PROTOCOL**

Telephone the restaurant and speak to the manager regarding their doggy dining policy. Understand that restaurants often make rules about where dogs are allowed because they must. Local health codes are strictly enforced by health inspectors, who can fine or even close down a restaurant for noncompliance.

Generally, dogs are allowed in outdoor dining areas, unless they have to enter the restaurant to access this area. Some restaurants allow dogs and their owners to be placed throughout the outdoor area, and others will confine you and your dog to a specific area of the patio. Then there are those restaurants that will not agree to your dog accompanying you on the terrace, but they will consent to you tying her to the rail, as long as she remains on the outside of the dining establishment on the sidewalk. Sly, aren't they? And of course, as with so many estab-



#### **PET TIP**

Always take your dog for

a walk and a quick play session before going out to a restaurant. The walk will ensure she doesn't need to eliminate anywhere near the restaurant, and the play session will tire her out so he will be more amenable to a long nap under your table while you are eating.

lishments these days, size may make a difference—ask the manager if there is a size restriction, too.

If you find that the policies are amenable, make a reservation. Even though your dog may be well-behaved, recognize that, like a child, the average dog may have difficulty remaining still for the duration of your meal. For this reason, consider taking your pet out for a quick lunch, light dinner, or simple snack rather

than a five-course made-to-order affair—and never bring your dog to a buffet, unless you're with a companion whom you trust to get your food or watch your dog while you're away from the table.

Although restaurateurs are concerned with health codes, they are also worried about complaints from dog-less diners. So there are two rules that all pet owners must understand before visiting restaurants with companion pooches. The first is that a clean dog with a repertoire of Sit, Down, and Stay is a welcome dining pleasure, and any other type of dog is not. Therefore, the second rule is that if your dog causes a disturbance, you should be prepared to leave your meal and pay your check.

### WHAT TO DO WHILE EATING

Once at the restaurant, request a table on the periphery. A calmer atmosphere with fewer distractions should encourage your pooch to hold a Down-Stay longer. As you approach your designated table, keep your dog close to you and under control. This is not the time to let her sniff around, explore, or, worse, greet other patrons. Once you're comfortable, place the carrier—or have your dog lie down—directly under the table. Although your dog will not be noticed (and admired) by other diners, she will be safe from passing patrons and bustling servers carrying hot food or breakables, all of whom could step

on a paw or tail, or trip on and injure your dog or themselves. Secure the dog by holding her leash with the hand you do not use to eat or by putting your foot through the leash loop.

As tempting as it may be to keep a small, well-trained dog on your lap during a meal, resist the urge to show her off. While you may want to display her good looks and excellent manners, or simply want to share a meal as you often do at home, it's very likely that other customers will view this habit as unsanitary and uncouth. As pleasant a dining companion as your pooch may be to you, respect the fact that not everyone feels the same way.

Carrying pet supplies is a must for doggy diners, since it is inappropriate to allow pets to drink or eat from restaurant dinnerware. For her dining pleasure, pack a portable bowl and a few biscuits. If your pooch is thirsty, pour some water from the carafe or your glass directly into her water bowl, or have her drink from a paper cup. For restaurants that offer you a dog bowl full of water for your dog at the table, take advantage of this option.

### **NEVER FEED FROM YOUR PLATE**

Once your meal is presented, don't commit a faux pas by serving her from your plate, and discourage her from begging or whining for food by discreetly giving her doggy treats—not your food—under the table.

I have a neighbor who regularly takes her dogs to the local outdoor café. She asks for a table for three, and places her Pekingese in one chair and her Lhasa Apso in the other. She feeds the dogs tidbits off her dishes, and they sit politely in their chairs throughout the meal. As adorable as it may look, not everyone wants to sit down at a table that has just been occupied by two dogs. On one occasion, I saw a couple refuse to be seated at the table this indulgent dog owner had just vacated. The woman heard them and made an angry remark. An argument ensued. All this does is place the restaurant owner in an extremely difficult position—and make it less likely that dogs will be welcomed in his café in the future.

### **KEEP ADMIRERS AT BAY**

An adorable and well-behaved dog out for a meal is sure to be an animal attraction. But don't let your canine companion cause too much of a commotion. She may get so excited that she forgets her manners. Thank her admirers for their interest and politely explain that you are famished and would like to finish your meal. On the other hand, if your server does not pet your pooch or seems to ignore her, don't be surprised. Even the slightest touch by a server requires a trip to the washroom.

At the end of the meal, use your judgment when tipping. A tip of 20 percent is recommended when dining