

the CANINE CORNER

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Paul Talbot and his business partner Manu Rangimoekau deliberately decided that their Urban Eatery cafes in Christchurch would be dog-friendly. I'm talking truly dog-friendly, because the dogs are allowed inside with their human family to dine.

"We opened the Urban Eatery cafes in Barrington and Cashmere in 2020 as additions to our dog-friendly café in Leeston named the Suburban Eatery. We also have two catering businesses which trade as the Country Lane Group. It was the year of COVID-19 and our business was looking for additional opportunities to diversify since the catering trade had been disrupted," says Paul.

Paul and Manu share their life with a nine-year-old German Shepherd; going dog-friendly was an easy choice to make.

Under the Food Act, establishments must take a risk-based approach to management and have a documented Food Control Plan. Operators of cafes, bars and restaurants may allow animals in areas used by customers so long as they have made provisions to ensure that animals cannot come into contact with food that is for sale.

The business must also regularly clean and sanitise surfaces in areas where animals are allowed.

"Word has travelled fast that our Urban Eateries are dog-friendly and the reception has been overwhelmingly positive. The dogs that have been brought into the cafes have been well-behaved and owners have been both respectful and appreciative of the opportunity to dine with their dog at their side.

"Because we have publicised that the cafes are dog-friendly, there are no surprises for customers who may not like dogs or who may be uncomfortable based on religious grounds. For these customers, we know there are many options for them to dine without dogs."

My greyhound and her friends are experienced café dogs and so on a Sunday before Christmas, we booked ourselves a table at the Urban Eatery in Barrington. Sure enough, Paul was right: there's no mistaking that the café is dog-friendly given the signage on the front window.

We were led to a table sporting a reservation tag for seven hoomans and six doggos and then the love fest began with pats from members of the admiring waitstaff. A dog treat was available at every place setting and water bowls had been placed strategically around our table. Children who came to dine with their families were especially interested in saying hello to our dogs.

Wonderful company and good food made for a relaxing start to our day.

Many cafes allow dogs with their owners in outdoor patio settings but comparatively few are currently allowing dogs to enter the premises.

While we are currently enjoying the warm summer weather, indoor venues which allow dogs inside will undoubtedly become more popular as the colder autumn and winter months set in. 🐾

