



Sept. 28. 2017

Sunday morning. Brunch! Time to catch up with the crowd, ease gently into the day after that crazy night you just had and maybe sink a fork or straw into something tasty and unexpected.

But if you live with an Irish wolfhound, you may not be able to tear yourself away for a few hours of what little free time you have with him or her. Personally, I get facial tics after more than three hours apart from Oona and Oisin. Like me, you may get hives, as well. So, have you considered brunching with your wolfhound?

No, really. I haven't lost my mind. Brunch with a wolfhound doesn't *have* to be the epic disaster you're probably picturing in your head right now. With a little preparation, it may not even devolve into personal injury lawyers and being banned for life from your favorite watering hole.

A growing number of restaurants are becoming more dog friendly, especially in more urban, dog-centric areas. In states with enlightened health laws, you can brunch on patios and porches of many eateries. Smart restaurateurs accommodate patrons with dogs, providing gourmet treats and drinking water for your furry dining companion.

Of course, wolfhounds present unique challenges. Most dogs have to peek over the edge for a look at the spread. Seated, your wolfhound is level with you in your chair. Elbow blocks will just save so much food if your hound thinks "leave it" is merely a suggestion.

They'll surprise you. Sometimes in *good* ways. Some wolfhounds are more cooperative than others. Finn, our first, once traveled with us to Tampa to see friends. We dropped in on [St. Armands Circle](#), a toney shopping district near Sarasota. We turned a corner and found ourselves in a serious quandry. We could either walk down the side of a busy street or continue on the sidewalk — straight through an upscale outdoor cafe. It was a white tablecloth gauntlet. Tenderloins on the left, lobsters on the right, savory and buttered. Finn was the perfect gentleman, it turned out. He didn't scarf down a single

dinner roll on the way by.

Oona, on the other hand, is a notorious freebooter. Once at a festival I turned my head for a second, looked back and she was looking a short little woman pointedly in the eye. The woman had a cardboard plate of fried veggies. Oona was one step away from scrawling a stickup note when I hustled her out of there. She's had a tad more training since that near miss.

Most wolfhounds will live up to your expectations. You just have to be crystal clear and firm on what those expectations are or you hound will improvise, sometimes in clever and shocking ways. Especially where food is involved.

At mealtime at home, if you're in the habit of sharing tidbits or just letting them dive face-forward in your plate, yours may not be the best candidate for public dining. Not unless you're prepared to rack up an outrageously high bill and tip *generously*.

We now ask Oona to sit patiently (and a few feet away) while we eat. She's then rewarded with bits of our dinner — as long as she stays seated. Subtle scoots forward mean the meal's over for her. She's a smart girl. She stays put.

It's the same training any dog goes through, but not any dog can clear an entire table in two swipes so...manners are essential. Insist on them. And discourage drooling while staring intimidatingly at the other diners. In fact, it's best if your hound is trained to lie down during the meal or your brunch friends will start feeding your dog just to avoid their laser gaze.

Baying mournfully should also be discouraged...

And especially on your first few outings, don't be distracted when people flock over to meet your wolfhound. They will. And even

well-behaved hounds are opportunists. Get sidetracked explaining that wolfhounds cleared the wolfs out of Ireland and you may find that they've cleared your table, tablecloth and all.

So, yes, it may be touch and go on your first few outings. Try a few test runs at less crowded times of the day in less popular restaurants. Ease into it. Maybe just coffee at an outdoor table. Carry treats of your own in case the restaurant provides none. Gain a little confidence and build up to a full meal. But stick to it and you'll have a reliable dining companion and more time you can spend your with furry friend.

Plus win the admiration of fellow diners that you've tamed the hungry beast...