

## **Are Pup Cups Safe for Your Dog to Enjoy?**

Pup cups are a popular treat for furry companions, but are they truly safe or healthy? Here's what you need to know before giving your pet one.

### **STORY AT-A-GLANCE**

- Pup cups are small dog treats made of whipped cream or vanilla ice cream offered by cafes and restaurants. They were popularized by Starbucks' Puppuccino in 2008, and are now widely available at restaurants and cafes across the country
- While generally safe in moderation, pup cups are high in fat and sugar, and may cause digestive issues for lactose-intolerant dogs or those with sensitive stomachs
- Veterinarians recommend limiting pup cups to small amounts (a spoonful) once a week and always checking ingredients for potential toxins like xylitol before feeding
- The trend of pet-friendly treats extends beyond pup cups to include non-alcoholic pet wines and specially crafted cakes made with pet-safe ingredients like pumpkin and liver
- Pet owners can easily make homemade pup cups using chilled heavy cream whipped to peak consistency, ensuring a controlled and simple treat for their dogs

Does your pup get wildly excited every time you pull into the drive-thru line at your local coffee shop? Or perhaps, they can't wait to enter your usual café, knowing they're in for a treat — a "pup cup," to be more specific.

Pup cups are all the rage today, with many dining establishments becoming pet-friendly, and opening their doors to four-legged customers. But while you may think that pup cups are a nice treat to share with your furry best friend, there are some considerations you need to remember.

### **What Is a Pup Cup?**

Basically, a pup cup is a small cup filled with whipped cream or soft-serve vanilla ice cream that cafes and restaurants give to customers as a complimentary treat (though in some establishments, you may need to pay a small fee for it).

According to online sources, pup cups started in 2008 when Pet Rescue Advocate Rocky Kanaka began serving little cups of vegan whipped cream in his dog bakeries, as a special treat to dogs.<sup>1</sup> The trend caught on, and eventually, Starbucks introduced their own version, the Puppuccino (a play on the words "puppy" and "cappuccino"). September 23rd is now dubbed "National Puppuccino Day," and in 2021, the company even trademarked the name.<sup>2</sup>

Other stores also came up with their own versions, such as Dunkin' Donuts' Cup for a Pup, Shake Shack's Poochi-ni and Sonic's Wag Cup.<sup>3</sup> These establishments have put their own spin on the pup cup, even adding dog-friendly ingredients like peanut butter and dog biscuits. In some stores, pup cups are a complimentary treat for dogs of paying customers,

but in others, you may need to pay a small amount before getting one.

## Are Pup Cups Safe for Your Dog?

Most pup cups are simply whipped cream, which isn't toxic to dogs when fed in small amounts and given as an occasional treat. However, if you've made it part of your daily routine to give a pup cup to your pet, be aware — whipped cream is high in fat and sugar, and is not good for your pet's health when fed in excess. According to veterinarian Dwight Alleyne:

*"While whipped cream is generally safe for dogs in small amounts, it's important to keep in mind that it's not a nutritious snack. Most dogs don't need extra sugar or fat in their diet, and too much whipped cream can lead to digestive upset or even weight gain over time. Always check with your vet before offering new treats, especially those that are high in fat or sugar."*<sup>4</sup>

Some dogs are also lactose intolerant; when given pup cups, they may experience digestive issues or an upset stomach.<sup>5</sup> Hence, moderation is important when giving a pup cup to your pet. Try sticking to small amounts (a spoonful or less) once a week or so.

*"Before you offer any new treat, it's always a good idea to check with your vet, especially if your dog has a sensitive stomach or a history of food allergies. After offering whipped cream, keep an eye on your dog to make sure they don't experience any adverse reactions like bloating, diarrhea, or excessive gas," an article in Yahoo! Life says.*<sup>6</sup>

## Tips to Remember Before Feeding Your Dog a Pup Cup

Pup cups are just one of the humanized dog treats that are being offered today. Another example is Pawsecco, a non-alcoholic, grape-free wine made from fruits that provide an antioxidant boost. It's safe for both dogs and cats.<sup>7,8</sup>

There are also dog and cat cakes and cupcakes made for celebrating our furry companions. Unlike traditional cakes made with bread, sugar and frosting, these pet-friendly treats use ingredients like pumpkin, liver, minced meat, fish and mashed potatoes, which are all safe for pets.<sup>9</sup>

Pup cups, as with other treats, should only make up 10% of your dog's daily calorie intake. Aside from giving these snacks in moderation, it's important to be vigilant about the ingredients used in pup cups. Remember, some sugar-free whipped cream brands use xylitol, which is highly toxic to pets. Here are other tips to keep in mind:

- **Familiarize yourself with the ingredients** — While most restaurants and cafes offering dog-friendly snacks or treats have most likely done their due diligence, it is important to remain vigilant to ensure your pet does not consume anything harmful. Ask about the brand of whipped cream used, what toppings are added, and so on.
- **Consult with your veterinarian before feeding pup cups** — This is particularly important if your pet is struggling with any health problems, such as food sensitivities or allergies.
- **Be on the lookout for adverse reactions** — If you notice your pet experiencing nausea, vomiting, bloating, diarrhea or excessive gas after eating a pup cup, stop feeding it right away.

# Make Your Own Pup Cup at Home

Remember that treats like pup cups should not replace your pet's nutritionally balanced, species-appropriate biological diet. Another suggestion is to make pup cups at home instead of buying them from Starbucks. The Green Pet Project<sup>10</sup> gives a simple step-by-step recipe you can follow (you will need heavy cream and a hand mixer or stand mixer for this).

## Homemade Pup Cup Recipe

### Directions:

1. Chill the heavy cream in the freezer for 15 minutes. Ensure the cream is not at room temperature, as the method requires chilled cream.
2. Place half a cup of the chilled cream into a mixing bowl (this will make around 1 cup of whipped treat).
3. Mix the cream on high speed using a hand or stand mixer. This process takes less than 1 minute.
4. Once the cream starts to form peaks (meaning it holds its shape), it's ready to serve.

### Sources and References

<sup>1</sup> [Rocky Kanaka, March 11, 2022](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Business Insider, May 15, 2021](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Covetrus Great Pet Care, January 26, 2023](#)

<sup>4,5,6</sup> [Yahoo! Life, November 19, 2024](#)

<sup>7</sup> [Petplanet, Pawsecco Pet-house Wine for Cats and Dogs 250ml](#)

<sup>8,9</sup> [Bay Vets, July 7, 2023](#)

<sup>10</sup> [The Green Pet Project, August 7, 2024](#)

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