FYI – For Your Information

Special Regulation: Eating and Drinking Establishments

The sale of meals and beverages is subject to sales tax and any person making such sales must acquire a sales tax license and collect sales tax based upon the total consideration paid thereon.

Caterers and other persons similarly engaged are liable for sales tax on the total selling price of items sold and/or charges for service essential to providing meals and beverages.

Private enterprises, such as commercial and manufacturing companies, and public agencies, such as governmental organizations, regularly serving, and charging their employees or the public for meals and beverages, are liable for sales tax based upon the selling price of such meals and beverages.

Fund-raising meals priced in excess of the regular selling price are subject to tax on the regular selling price.

The vendor of meals and drinks must pay the tax on purchases of most products used or consumed in the operation of his business, including fixtures, linens, silverware and glassware. Carpenter v. Carmen Co., 111 Colo. 566, 144 P. 2d 770, (1943). Plastic and paper products such as tablecloths, towelettes, napkins, soda straws, plates, knives, forks, spoons, and cups are specifically exempt from sales tax. §39-26-114(1)(a)(XVI) and (XVII), C.R.S.

When a customer purchases one dinner and receives another free as a result of presenting a coupon issued by the restaurant, tax applies only to the actual price charged. However, tax applies to the full (non-discounted) price of the meal when an entity other than the restaurant issues a coupon or similar chit for a price reduction or free meal. See, Special Regulation 11 (Coupons).

Boarding houses, which serve meals only to persons regularly boarding there and not to the public, should not collect sales tax on the meals. Such boarding houses are exempt from sales tax on their purchases of food, but must pay sales tax on all non-food items.

Bed and Breakfast Inns are engaged in selling meals, snacks and accommodations and the entire charge made is subject to sales tax. Therefore, Bed and Breakfast Inns can purchase food served to paying guests and guestroom supplies, such as tissue, soaps, lotions, or shoeshine cloths, free of sales tax.

The following gratuities are not subject to sales tax if the total amount of the gratuity is distributed by the vendor to persons who actually render the service: cash tips (money left by the patrons for use of those providing the service), charge tips (amounts added to Taxpayer Service Division sales check by the patrons for use of those 1375 Sherman St. providing the service), banquet tips, and tips separately stated and added to the sales Forms and other services: check by the vendor at a flat rate.



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