

# Restaurant Opening Checklist

A detailed opening checklist for restaurants and cafes that helps managers prepare the venue consistently, safely and on time.

By Ricky Recalcati

## How to use this checklist

Use this checklist before every service period. The goal is not to add admin. The goal is to make readiness visible before guests arrive.

The opening manager should complete each section, note any exceptions, and sign off only when the venue is safe, clean, stocked and ready for trade. If a task does not apply to your venue, mark it as not applicable and record why.

# Opening manager details

Date:

Venue:

Opening manager:

Shift:

Scheduled opening time:

Actual ready time:

Weather or local conditions:

Expected service level:

## Building and security

- ☐ Unlock venue and disarm alarm.
- ☐ Complete exterior inspection before staff enter.
- ☐ Check windows, external doors and visible damage.
- ☐ Confirm entry points are secure and functioning.
- ☐ Check all emergency exits are clear and unlocked for service.
- ☐ Turn on required internal and external lighting.
- ☐ Check for trip hazards, leaks, broken glass or unsafe surfaces.
- ☐ Inspect outdoor dining areas, umbrellas, barriers and signage.
- ☐ Record any damage, safety concern or maintenance issue.

**Security or maintenance notes:**

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## Front of house

- ☐ Floors are clean, dry and safe.
- ☐ Tables, chairs and booths are clean, stable and correctly positioned.
- ☐ Table settings match the service standard.
- ☐ Menus are clean, current and available in required quantities.
- ☐ Specials, unavailable items and price changes are confirmed.
- ☐ Reservation list has been checked.
- ☐ Large bookings, VIPs and special occasions are identified.
- ☐ POS terminals are turned on and tested.
- ☐ Printers, docket rails and order screens are working.
- ☐ Cash drawers are prepared and float has been checked.
- ☐ Music is on, appropriate and at the correct volume.
- ☐ Lighting is set for the service period.
- ☐ Temperature and ventilation feel comfortable for guests and staff.
- ☐ Bathrooms are clean, stocked and checked.
- ☐ Signage, menus, QR codes and entry information are correct.
- ☐ Waiting area, host stand and service stations are stocked.

**Front of house notes:**

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## Kitchen and food preparation

- ☐ Cooking equipment is turned on according to start-up procedure.
- ☐ Ovens, grills, fryers, burners and hot holding equipment are checked.
- ☐ Refrigeration temperatures are recorded.
- ☐ Freezer temperatures are recorded.
- ☐ Prep stations are clean, stocked and ready.
- ☐ Food labels, dates and use-by information have been checked.
- ☐ High-risk items are checked for quality and temperature.
- ☐ Stock levels are sufficient for expected trade.
- ☐ Prep shortages are escalated before service.
- ☐ Allergen information is current and accessible to the team.
- ☐ Sanitiser bottles, cloths and cleaning supplies are available.
- ☐ Handwash stations are stocked.
- ☐ Waste areas are clean and bins are lined.
- ☐ Dish area is ready for service.

### Temperature records:

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### Kitchen notes:

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## Bar and beverage

- ☐ Coffee machine is on, flushed and ready.
- ☐ Grinder, milk fridge and alternative milks are stocked.
- ☐ Ice supply is sufficient and safely handled.
- ☐ Glassware is clean, polished and stocked.
- ☐ Beverage fridges are stocked and at correct temperature.
- ☐ Wine, beer, spirits and non-alcoholic stock are checked.
- ☐ Garnishes are prepared, labelled and dated.
- ☐ Bar tools, cloths and sanitiser are ready.
- ☐ Till, EFTPOS and receipt printer are working.
- ☐ Water station is ready.

**Bar and beverage notes:**

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## Deliveries and stock

- ☐ Expected deliveries have been reviewed.
- ☐ Delivery area is clean and accessible.
- ☐ Shortages have been identified before service.
- ☐ Substitutions have been approved by the manager or chef.
- ☐ Damaged stock has been separated and recorded.
- ☐ Supplier issues have been noted for follow-up.
- ☐ Critical stock levels have been communicated to the team.

**Delivery or stock notes:**

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## Team readiness

- ☐ Roster has been confirmed.
- ☐ Attendance has been checked.
- ☐ Late arrivals or absences have been recorded.
- ☐ Uniform and presentation standards have been checked.
- ☐ Station allocation is complete.
- ☐ Break plan is understood.
- ☐ Pre-shift briefing has been completed.
- ☐ Specials and unavailable items have been explained.
- ☐ Bookings, VIPs and large groups have been reviewed.
- ☐ Allergies and dietary requirements have been highlighted.
- ☐ Sales targets or focus items have been communicated.
- ☐ New team members know who to ask for support.

**Pre-shift briefing focus:**

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# Safety and compliance

- ☐ First aid kit is accessible.
- ☐ Fire equipment access is clear.
- ☐ Emergency exits are clear and compliant.
- ☐ Temperature records are complete.
- ☐ Food safety checks are complete.
- ☐ Cleaning chemical storage is safe.
- ☐ Incident log has been reviewed.
- ☐ Any safety risk has been escalated before opening.

**Compliance notes:**

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# Final opening sign-off

The venue is clean, safe, stocked and ready for guests.

Opening manager sign-off:

Time signed off:

# Issues requiring follow-up

| Issue | Owner | Priority | Due |
|-------|-------|----------|-----|
|       |       |          |     |
|       |       |          |     |
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