



Opening a Restaurant Checklist



Introduction

So, you're thinking about opening a restaurant. Let us be the first to say, "Congrats!"

The restaurant industry is a vibrant, creative, and fast-paced place to work and build a business. But it's also very difficult to make money in the restaurant industry, and competition is fierce.

Now, more than ever, new restaurant owners need to carefully consider all of the variables it takes to successfully open a restaurant. With confidence and preparation, you'll be more likely to reach your goals.

That's why we're taking out the guesswork of what it takes to open a restaurant. From writing your business plan and getting permits to choosing a point of sale (POS) platform and securing capital, we're here to help you get started and see success in the restaurant industry.

This Opening a Restaurant Checklist includes what to consider at every stage of the opening process, from the preliminary planning to the day you open your doors (physically or virtually) for your first guest.

You can use the checklist digitally or print it out to keep on your desk — whatever works best for you.

Let's get into it:
Here's how to open a restaurant.*

***Disclaimer:** And just so you know, this content is for informational purposes only and is not intended as legal, accounting, tax, HR, or other professional advice. You're responsible for your own compliance with laws and regulations. Contact your attorney or other relevant advisor for advice specific to your circumstances.



What to consider before opening a restaurant

Before you start planning out a menu or choosing the decor, it's important to know *why* you want to open a restaurant. Becoming a restaurateur takes grit and perseverance, but more than anything, it takes planning. Here are some questions to consider early in your journey as a restaurant owner.



Tip: Jot down your answers so you can refer back to them later in the process.

QUESTIONS TO ANSWER:

What will my restaurant concept be?

What cuisine will my restaurant offer?

What will I name my restaurant?

What is the mission of my restaurant?

What will my **brand** be?

Note: This includes everything from your logo and font to the color palette and general atmosphere of your restaurant.

Who is my target customer?

Note: “Everyone” or “people who like [insert menu item here]” are not target customers. Your answer here should be specific — something like, “adults aged 25-50, married without children and a combined household income of \$150k.” This may seem unusual, but it’ll help you more accurately plan your pricing strategy and branding.

What is my pricing strategy? \$, \$\$, or \$\$\$?

What is my unique product/service opportunity?

What are some of my favorite restaurants and what makes them special?

What to consider before opening a restaurant

THINGS TO DO:

Write a **restaurant business plan**

Industry analysis

Marketing plan

Operations plan

Financial analysis

Goals

Create a budget, identifying the money needed to open the restaurant as well as 6-12 months of operating expenses

Buy a web domain to use for your website

→ Keep this simple, such as your restaurant name, so potential guests can easily find you online

Create your social media accounts and claim your handles

→ Much like your web domain, keep this simple —
@YourRestaurantName is ideal

Research the geographic area or neighborhood you'd like to open in

Hire an attorney

Find a commercial real estate agent

Gather information on existing restaurants in the area you're looking to open in

Set up your EIN, or Employer Identification Number

→ This is your federal tax ID number for your restaurant

Research what to expect to spend on opening your restaurant. Be sure to include things like real estate, equipment, inventory, and labor

Hire a graphic designer to create your logo and visual branding assets

9 months before opening

Now that you have the basics covered, it's time to think about funding and financing.

Restaurant financing refers to money sourced, borrowed, and/or loaned from an outside partner to help start, expand, support, or refurbish a restaurant business.

TO DO:

Rent or purchase your location

Purchase insurance

Get the applicable **licenses and permits** for your restaurant

Business license

Certificate of occupancy

Sign permit

Food service license

Liquor license

Building health permit

Employee health permit

Food safety certification

Seller's permit

Valet parking permit

Dumpster placement permit

Live entertainment license

Music license

Resale permit

Write a financial plan including estimated totals for each aspect of the business

Open a business bank account

Determine which restaurant financing option is best for you

A term loan from a "brick and mortar" bank

An alternative loan

A small business association loan, also known as an SBA Loan

A merchant cash advance

A business line of credit

Funds or equity from friends and family

Equipment financing

Crowdfunding

9 months before opening



Fast, flexible funding to power your restaurant

Toast Capital offers eligible Toast customers access to loans from \$5,000 to \$300,000, so you can take what you need to accomplish your goals – without any compounding interest or personal guarantees.

[Learn more >](#)

Toast Capital Loans are issued by WebBank, Member FDIC. Loans are subject to credit approval and may not be available in certain jurisdictions. WebBank reserves the right to change or discontinue this program without notice.

IF YOU DECIDE TO APPLY FOR A BUSINESS LOAN, HERE ARE SOME THINGS YOU MAY NEED TO GET ACCESS TO:

- Personal credit score
- Business credit score
- Social security card
- Business plan
- Business licenses and permits
- EIN (Employer Identification Number)
- Proof of collateral
- Annual business revenue and profit
- Bank statements
- Balance sheet
- Personal and business tax returns
- Copy of your commercial lease
- Disclosure of other debt
- A/R (Accounts Receivable) and A/P (Accounts Payable) Aging
- Proof of ownership and affiliations
- Legal contracts and agreements, like leases or partnership agreements

6 months before opening

Things are starting to feel real! Time to make some key decisions on securing a location and determining what will go into your restaurant.

TO DO:

Create a **floor plan**

Purchase **equipment** and furniture

Kitchen

- Ovens and grills
- Ranges and ventilation
- Freezers and refrigerators
- Storage racks and shelving
- Food processors
- Mixers
- Slicers
- Knives
- Storage containers
- Sinks

Kitchen display system (KDS)

- Washing equipment
- Microwave
- Ice maker

Aprons

Dining area

- Tables
- Chairs/booths
- Tableware
- Utensils
- Napkins
- Lighting fixtures
- Wall decorations
- Outdoor furniture for patio
- Order counter

Digital menu boards

- Printed menus
- Beverage taps

Safety and health

- Fire extinguishers
- Wet floor signs
- First aid kit
- Hairnets
- Gloves (dishwashing, cut-resistant, freezer, etc.)
- Slip-resistant mats
- Hand sanitizer

Bathroom

- Toilet paper
- Paper towels
- Hand dryers
- Hand soap

Office

- Pens
- Paper
- Computer
- Desk

Begin **sourcing food and beverage** inventory

Identify and procure suppliers

Research point of sale (**POS**) **platforms for your restaurant**

Start planning your menu

Order and install outdoor signage

3 months before opening

This time period is all about staffing and processes.

TO DO:

Set an appointment with health inspectors

Determine staffing needs and begin to source employees

Write **job descriptions** for each staff member needed, which may include:

Host

Restaurant manager

Assistant manager

Servers

Bussers

Dishwasher

Kitchen manager

Chef

Sous chef

Line cooks

Cleaning staff

Expeditor

Bartender

Cashier

Delivery driver

Post job listings online/in local media

Develop staff training documentation

Cleaning procedures

Restaurant training manual

Staff onboarding process

Safety procedures

Cash handling

2 months before opening

During this time frame, it's important to think about your opening day and how you're going to get guests in the door — and safely.

TO DO:

- Set up your **point of sale (POS)** platform and train employees on how to use it
- Organize the back-of-house
- Create Yelp and Google My Business profiles/locations
- Order non-perishable food items
- Test recipes, lock in ingredients, and **cost everything out**
- Finalize your **marketing plan and budget**
- Install smoke alarms and security systems, ensuring they have been tested and are working properly
- Set up your cable/internet

Just before opening

It's almost time to open! Here are some things to do before you serve your first guest.

TO DO:

- Test all of your equipment
- Set up your stations
- Host a **soft opening**
- Configure your online ordering system
 - Set hours of operation, giving yourself a buffer before close of day to ensure orders are able to be completed
 - Upload your menu(s)
 - Take photos of menu items and upload them to your menu
 - Integrate your **third-party delivery system with your POS**
- Plan your **grand opening**

After opening — and beyond!

Your restaurant dreams are finally coming true. But the grand opening was just the beginning of your story. Now, it's important to stay on top of your finances, inventory, and customer service. Here are some things to keep in mind *after* your restaurant opens.

TO DO:

Check in regularly with your staff

- Set a regular cadence for training/refreshers on policies

- Are they happy? What does your employee retention look like?

- Are you understaffing? Overstaffing? How can you adjust staffing requirements for each shift?

- Are they happy with the **tips**?

Review your marketing plan regularly

- Are you spending too much, or not enough, on marketing?

- Consider adding marketing channels, such as social media, email, or SMS marketing, if you haven't already

Adjust purchasing and menu based on inventory

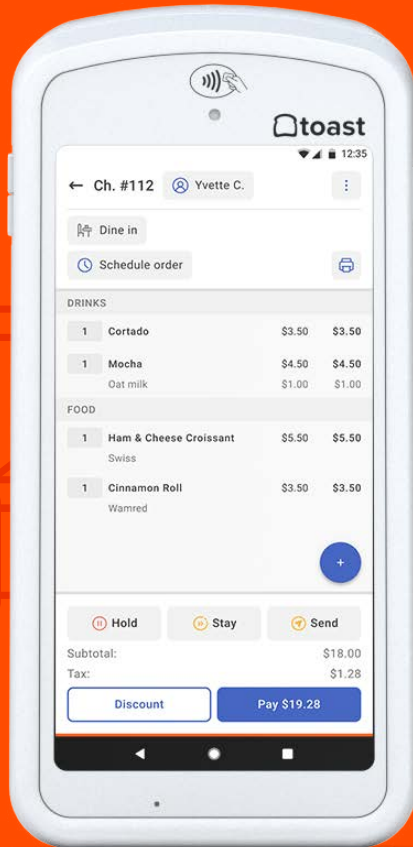
- Conduct regular **waste audits** to track and reduce food waste

- Calculate your **plate cost**



The learning doesn't end here! **Join On The Line** to get real stories, dispatches from industry folks, and not-so-typical advice for the hardest-working professionals in the world sent right to your inbox.

Plus, check out **Learn with Toast** — video training to help you start (and grow) your restaurant business.



Thrive with Toast, the restaurant-first POS platform built for your needs

See what you can accomplish with a POS platform that grows with you.

You can customize Toast's end-to-end platform to fit your needs. Whether you need the basics or the whole package, we're built for you – whatever your size, concept, or ambitions.

Ranked in 2022 as **G2's leading restaurant point of sale**, Toast is quick to learn and even easier to use.

"When I see other restaurants choose Toast as their POS right when they open, I think, 'I wish I did that,'" says Omar Tijerina, Co-owner of **Gateway Bagel Co.** "The quickest way to get to the next level, in terms of food service and POS, is Toast. I don't see a POS service that distributes, markets, or is more fully realized than Toast."

Request a demo with a local product expert to see how Toast differs from other point of sale platforms and get a customized walkthrough for your unique needs.

Visit pos.toasttab.com/request-demo to learn more.

Learn more today