

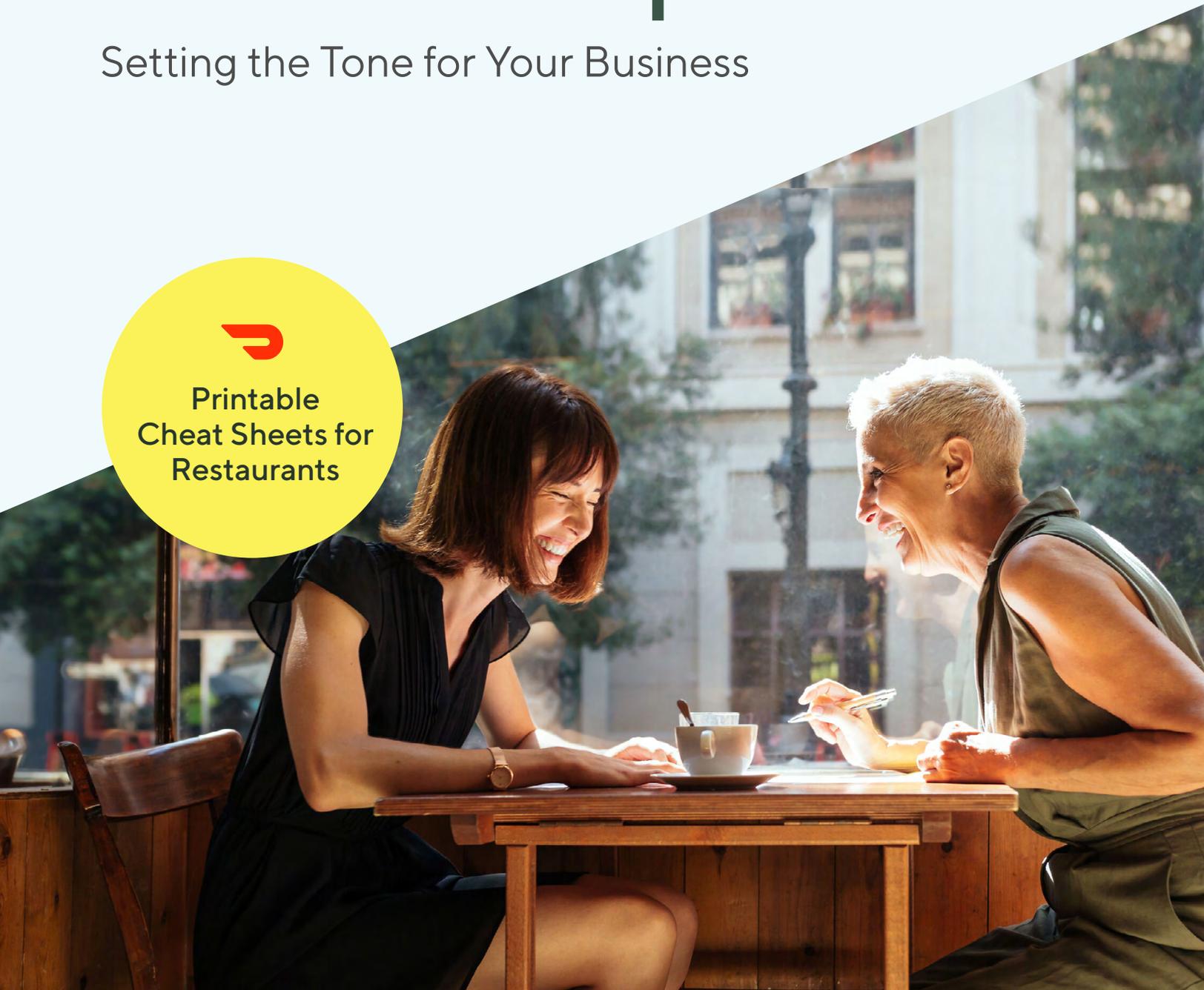


# Finding Your Restaurant Niche and Concept

Setting the Tone for Your Business



Printable  
Cheat Sheets for  
Restaurants



**Welcome!** If you're here, it probably means you're a restaurant owner or operator hungry for ways to ensure your latest venture is a stunning success.

No matter where your business stands in its lifecycle, this guide can show you how to refine your restaurant niche, identify your key differentiators, and start paving the road for a thriving eatery. Let's get started.

Click each section to skip forward.

## In this guide, you'll learn about:

### 01 Laying the foundation

Explore 11 types of restaurants – and find the one that best defines you

**TOOL** Restaurant Type Cheat Sheet



### 02 Understanding your target market

Identify who your diners are and how to reach them

**ACTIVITY** Target Audience Questionnaire

**CHECKLIST** Evaluating Your Market

### 03 Creating a concept

Develop a comprehensive vision for your restaurant

**CHECKLIST** Finding Your Restaurant's Niche

### 04 Formulating a mission statement

How do you inspire your diners, your staff, and yourself every single day?

**ACTIVITY** Build Your Mission

### 05 Expanding beyond the storefront

The ins and outs of food delivery



CHAPTER 1

# Laying the foundation

---

Explore 11 types of restaurants —  
and find the one that  
best defines you

# Which of these 11 types of eateries is right for you?

The global foodservice industry will surpass [\\$12 trillion by 2020](#). With seemingly endless variety, it can be challenging to settle on a single restaurant niche. Let's start with a quick overview of some of the most popular types of restaurants.



## Fast food



A quick-service experience for customers on the go, often a part of a chain or franchise.

**Ordering:** Guests order at a counter or window.

**Menus:** The menu is standardized. Usually, some or all of the food is processed – burgers, french fries, and other fried foods make up the bulk of the menu.

**Experience:** Disposable serveware and cutlery add portability and convenience to the meal.

**Delivery potential:** Fast food pairs well with food delivery, since your customers are looking for speed and convenience.



## Fast casual



Like fast food, fast casual restaurants also focus on convenience and speed.

**Ordering:** Guests order their meals at a counter.

**Menus:** They typically offer healthier food and higher quality ingredients. Sometimes, guests can customize ingredients, sauces, and toppings.

**Experience:** The environment is casual and often modern.

**Delivery potential:** Fast casual pairs well with food delivery. And you can increase your customer base – without having to add physical seating.



## Casual dining



Casual restaurants are a huge category (think IHOP, Olive Garden, or The Cheesecake Factory).

**Ordering:** Unlike fast food or fast casual, these establishments offer table service.

**Menus:** Variety is key. Casual restaurants could include a popular cheesecake spot or Italian chain restaurant – and everything in between.

**Experience:** Diners are served in a sit-down environment with non-disposable dishware.

**Delivery potential:** Food delivery can really amp up revenue for casual dining restaurants, sometimes raising incremental revenue by [as much as 40-60%](#).



## Buffet



A buffet offers an all-encompassing array of self-serve food stations.

**Ordering:** Diners pay a set price for “All You Can Eat” or for a fixed number of servings.

**Menus:** Buffets have either a theme (like Chinese food) or a selection of meal or cuisine types (such as a salad bar, hot food bar, and dessert station).

**Experience:** Typically casual. There may be table service to refresh serveware and order drinks.

**Delivery potential:** Even a buffet can be delivered. Customers can take their pick. With [DoorDash's](#) signature insulated bags, the food will arrive piping hot or crisp and cold – just the way it is in your restaurant.



## Contemporary casual



These restaurants have risen in popularity thanks to their social media-ready decor and ambiance.

**Ordering:** Guests are served at a table or counter.

**Menus:** From farm-to-table to tapas, these restaurants expose customers to different types of cuisines in a buzzy atmosphere.

**Experience:** Contemporary casual eateries are modern and slightly upscale.

**Delivery potential:** Delivery for this category gives diners a chance to try your restaurant — even if they can't get a reservation or don't want to wait in line.



## Family style



Family style restaurants specialize in larger portions of food, intended for sharing.

**Ordering:** These restaurants offer table service.

**Menus:** The menu might offer family style meals only, or shareable portions alongside regular entrees.

**Experience:** At each table, guests help themselves from shared plates. The atmosphere promotes a sense of community.

**Delivery potential:** For diners with kids, getting to a restaurant can be half the battle. [DoorDash Drive](#) can help you deliver large catering orders without a hitch.



## Café



Cafés are typically known for beverages, snacks, and a social atmosphere.

**Ordering:** Counter and table service is common.

**Menus:** Many cafés have a more limited food menu, including pastries, sandwiches, and salads.

**Experience:** Cafés typically serve as a space for customers to meet up, socialize, or work.

**Delivery potential:** When you're the go-to coffee shop in town, delivery helps your food menu get more traction. [DoorDash](#) makes it easy to swap out menu items, so you can tell the neighborhood about your new cinnamon buns or spiced currant scones.



## Food truck



A food truck is a temporary, permanent, or mobile restaurant housed in a truck or stand — and located outdoors.

**Ordering:** Guests order from a window.

**Menus:** Most serve a small menu specializing in one type of cuisine, such as tacos, dumplings, or ice cream.

**Experience:** Food trucks are casual and allow guests to try foods they wouldn't otherwise.

**Delivery potential:** Foot traffic can be tricky to secure when your location changes daily. That's how food delivery opens up new avenues for food trucks. You can always be right where customers can find you — on the app and in their homes, fast.





## Pop-up



Pop-up restaurants are based around a specific concept, experience, or type of cuisine.

**Ordering:** The service ranges from counter to table service, depending on the restaurant.

**Menus:** Creativity reigns supreme. Because of the short-term nature, locations are often non-traditional – and menu items may fluctuate.

**Experience:** Pop-ups are open for a small window of time, ranging from a weekend to several months, and generally see a high amount of foot traffic.

**Delivery potential:** Delivery spreads the word about your pop-up – before locals may even know you're there. After all, [84% of adults in America alone](#) order from apps within a month.



## Cloud kitchen



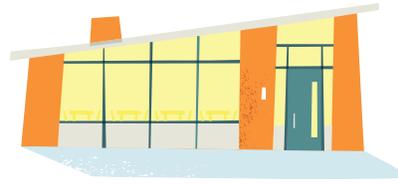
Cloud kitchens – or ghost kitchens – are rented kitchen spaces without a dining room.

**Ordering:** These restaurants partner with a delivery service (like [DoorDash](#)) to deliver the meals or offer customer pick-up.

**Menus:** The menu could take any shape – and even change from day to day. On DoorDash, diners are treated to a mouthwatering selection of visual and descriptive meals.

**Experience:** Cloud kitchens work quickly and can turn over several orders – customers may not know you, but they'll know your great food.

**Delivery potential:** Cloud kitchens were made for delivery – and they require zero front-of-house staff, zero front-of-house overhead. Feed more customers with a leaner team, and watch your profits soar.



## Fine dining



A fine dining restaurant is considered a special-occasion or high-end place to dine.

**Ordering:** Table service is imperative.

**Menus:** Meals in these restaurants command a higher price point, with complex, high-quality food. Food may be served from a pre-fixe menu, multiple courses, or a standard menu.

**Experience:** Waitstaff provide a greater level of service, often offering advice on a wine list or specialized knowledge of the food.

**Delivery potential:** Offering fine dining fare on a delivery platform can make every day feel like a special occasion, especially when your customer is eating it... in sweatpants.

All of these restaurant types can thrive with a delivery service partner. By 2022, the food delivery industry is expected to reach \$76 billion in value – compared to its [\\$43 billion in 2018](#). Becoming a part of its growth is a recipe for success.

Choosing a leading platform like [DoorDash](#) is a must – and it will broaden your restaurant to a whole new audience of fans and regulars.





CHAPTER 2

# Understanding your target market

---

Identify who your diners are  
and how to reach them

**ACTIVITY****Target Audience Questionnaire**

## Who are you serving? What are their dining habits?

For restaurants, neighborhood preferences and foot traffic patterns play heavily into success. That's why you want to study the demographics, socioeconomic characteristics, and behavioral patterns of your potential customers.



### Consider regional trends.

In Wisconsin, dishes containing cheese curds are [especially popular](#). Delaware's specialty food items include a [Thanksgiving sandwich](#) and [these slippery dumplings](#). Australians love meat pies, Lamingtons, and kangaroo. And some Canadians don't go a week without poutine.

### Explore local trends.

Use what you find out to help determine what type of restaurant the community needs. Think about age groups, lifestyle preferences, and dining habits.

- Areas with lots of offices favor food trucks, fast casual restaurants, fast food, and other lunch spots.
- [Top college preferences](#) include pizza, burgers, salads, chicken wings, beer bars, breakfast, dumplings, tacos, Thai, and desserts. *Everyone* loves brunch.
- If your town has several organic grocery stores and a popular farmer's market, a healthy fast casual restaurant may perform well.
- Younger generations are highly tech-savvy. [90% of millennials order from restaurants](#) at least once a week. Since millennials are the largest living generation, partnering with a delivery app like [DoorDash](#) could be a clever way to please customers (and boost your popularity).



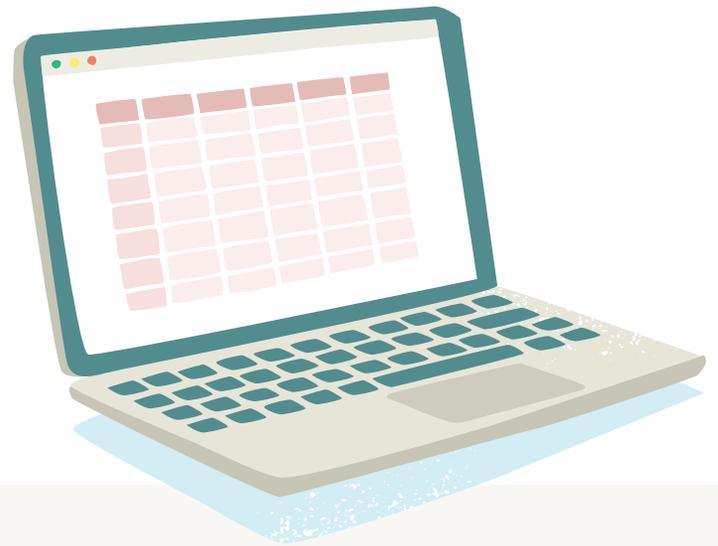
### Mind the weather.

Bad weather means fewer diners. This can be hard to predict and control. You'll want to pick a restaurant type that doesn't rely heavily on foot traffic, so you can offset heat waves, rainstorms, and cold-weather slow-downs.

**Use our checklist on the next page to evaluate your market!**

# Evaluating Your Market

14 ingredients to consider before building your business



## Neighborhood

What are the most popular restaurants in your chosen local community? What kind of restaurants are they?

**i** HINT: You'll be competing with these restaurants, so make sure yours stands out!

Does your area lean more towards traditional or modern?

**i** HINT: If the vibe is more old-school, a concept restaurant may not be as popular – and vice versa.

Will people in your area pay a premium for food? Or are they more budget-oriented? Or is it a mix of both?

**i** HINT: Your pricing may ultimately come down to food costs, but take the socioeconomic demographics of your area into consideration.

Is there a concentration of any particular age group or household type in your area; e.g., college students, single professionals, young couples, large families, retirees, or some other demographic?

**i** HINT: Certain populations prefer different types atmospheres – including quick and casual, kid-friendly options, impressive for a business lunch, and so on.

## Audience

Do you want to focus on neighborhood families and other regulars, or out-of-towners?

**i** HINT: Travelers like something out of the ordinary, but neighbors may prefer a more laid back, familiar environment.

Would you like to appeal to certain age groups ([millennials](#), [Gen X](#), [Gen Y](#), [Gen Z](#))?

**i** HINT: Younger demographics are more interested in trendy foods and Instagram-worthy ambiance, while older diners may seek more traditional fare.

Would you like your food to appeal to everyone, or a very specific niche, such as pizza lovers, vegans, or couples on dates?

**i** HINT: Keep in mind that a niche restaurant may have a more narrow appeal – but can still attract a loyal fan base.

## Food

Do you plan to offer an extensive menu, or will you stick to serving a handful of crowd favorites?

- i** HINT: There are advantages to both. The amount of time a customer spends in your restaurant and the type of service they'll receive can both influence your menu length.

Do you prefer to use local or organic ingredients? How will you source your food? What are some local farms you can buy from? Do you have favorite purveyors you'd like to use?

- i** HINT: Using local or organic ingredients can drive up costs, but customers may also be willing to pay more for them. Make sure to share the story about the ingredients — and their origins.

Is there an emphasis on freshness with your menu — so that you need to serve your food within days (or even hours) of receiving it (say raw oysters)? Can you use frozen or processed food to extend your service timelines (say fast food)?

- i** HINT: In most cases, it's not going to be all or none. Using a combination of both can help you maximize freshness where it counts — and cut costs where it doesn't.

Is there an ethnic component to the food you want to offer? Would you be using traditional or modernized recipes?

- i** HINT: Don't feel like you have to box yourself in. Some of the most successful restaurants merge multiple influences and cooking styles.

## Service

How do you envision serving the food? Should diners be able to see or smell the food before they order it? Do you want customers to sit and savor their meals, or would you like to provide a convenient way for on-the-go patrons to grab a bite?

- i** HINT: Dining can range from a ten-minute bite to a four-hour immersive experience. Be sure to set your ambiance — and pricing — accordingly.

Do you want to offer diners any complimentary items? For instance, the words "Olive Garden" conjure up images of unlimited breadsticks — and kids everywhere associate McDonald's with Happy Meal toys.

- i** HINT: Storytelling sells. By serving up a memorable experience, you can boost brand perception and build a loyal customer base.

Should you spice up the dining experience with interactive elements?

- i** HINT: Location, location, location. If you're based in a buzzing theater district, you may consider hiring waitstaff with a flair for showmanship. Or, if you're opening up beside a major stadium, sports screenings may be a part of your game plan.

A chef in a white uniform is shown from the chest down, holding a white plate. The plate contains a dish of pasta, likely fettuccine, topped with a sauce, cheese, and fresh basil leaves. The background is dark, and the chef's hands are visible as they hold the plate. The image is partially obscured by a large yellow diagonal shape on the left side of the page.

## CHAPTER 3

# Creating a concept

---

Develop a comprehensive  
vision for your restaurant

**CHECKLIST****Find Your Restaurant's Niche**

It's possible to stand out beyond your competitors – if you know your restaurant niche. Instead of leaving success to chance, determining what direction to head in requires careful thought, intentional planning, and a clear vision. Your restaurant type influences everything in your business plan. It informs menu options, price point, and level of service – and helps you map out your growth trajectory, too.



Use this checklist to inspire your unique vision. (And if you still end up stuck, browse the hundreds of thousands of restaurants on [DoorDash](#) for inspiration.)

My goal is to provide convenience for people on-the-go.



Consider opening a fast food or fast casual restaurant.

I'm looking to feed a lunchtime crowd of busy professionals.



Fast casual may be for you.

I'd like to offer affordable sit-down options in a casual setting.



Your concept may be suited to casual dining.

I'm looking to offer a large variety of cuisines in a casual setting.



Consider a buffet.

I would like to build a brand with backing from a name people trust.



A franchise can help you achieve your goals.

My restaurant will be popular on social media and serve semi-upscale fare.



Consider a contemporary casual restaurant.

I want to serve meals made for sharing and encourage a communal atmosphere.



Serve up community with a family style space.

I'm looking to power people through their mornings with a selection of hot drinks and pastries.



Caffeinate the public with a cafe.

I want to have creative freedom and bring my food to as many people as possible.



Feed your free spirit with a food truck.

My restaurant will be a short-term experiment for me to try out new concepts and menu items.



Open a pop-up and see what sticks.

I'd like to become a destination for high-end fare, special events, and occasions.



Serve this fancy fare through a fine dining establishment.

My budget is small, but I want to bring people food anytime, anywhere.



Open a ghost kitchen (and consider partnering with a top delivery platform like [DoorDash](#)).



## CHAPTER 4

# Formulating a mission statement

---

How will you inspire your diners, your staff, and yourself — every single day?

# Begin telling your story

You've already decided what type of restaurant you are and who you will serve. Now, it's time to decide what you stand for.

The first step is developing a mission statement that connects what you do with the reason you're

doing it. Humans have been sharing stories for thousands of years — so whether your specialty is fast food or fine dining, a compelling mission statement is a key ingredient for success.



**To get started, you'll want to ask yourself four foundational questions:**

- 1 What inspired me to open my restaurant?
- 2 What beliefs and values are built into my business?
- 3 What do I aim to achieve with my business?
- 4 What sets my restaurant apart from competitors?

Maybe you're passionate about partnering with local farmers to serve sustainable, farm-to-table dishes. Perhaps you dream of brewing up connections (and mouthwatering macchiatos) in a cozy café. Or, your mission might be making meal time easier for working parents by offering convenient, to-go options — in which case, delivery would likely play a large part in your restaurant's identity. Research suggests that stories are [22 times more memorable](#) than facts alone — so use this to your advantage by telling a unique brand story.

Now that you've reflected on your restaurant's identity, it's time to put pen to paper. According to angel investor Tim Berry, [90% of proposed mission statements are "wastes of time, paper, or digital space."](#) The biggest culprit behind a mediocre mission statement? Lack of clarity.

Instead of serving up empty phrases like "delicious dishes" and "commitment to customer service," dig into the specifics of your business, because concrete language is the recipe for success.

# Mission statements for everyday inspiration

Looking for inspiration? The following mission statements have enabled their restaurants to draw huge followings.



“

To inspire and nurture the human spirit — one person, one cup, and one neighborhood at a time.

**Why it works:**

Here, Starbucks reveals what’s really fueling their business (hint: it’s not just the coffee). First, they share a memorable aspiration of nurturing the human spirit. Then, they introduce a concrete visual — “one cup at a time” — to show customers just how they’ll do it.

---

swætgreen®

“

To inspire healthier communities by connecting people to real food.

**Why it works:**

It’s simple. It’s specific. And it sticks.

---

Zambrero

“

To end world hunger.

**Why it works:**

Unapologetically aspirational, these words humanize Zambrero’s brand — inspiring customers to look beyond the menu and see the bigger picture.

---

With these examples in mind, it’s time to try writing your own mission statement. (Remember: **Concise, clear, concrete** copy is the winning combination!)

**ACTIVITY****Build Your Mission**

Take a look at these two mission statements for a fictional restaurant and try to spot the difference.

**Our mission is to...**

“Serve the best seafood in town.”

The only thing mission statement #1 stands out for is being too generic. Readers are left to wonder:

- **How** does this restaurant serve the best seafood in town?
- **What** makes their seafood so great?
- **Why** did they specialize in seafood, to begin with?



“Support the local fishing community by serving fresh, tide-to-table fare that honors Long Island’s maritime history.”

Our brains are trained to gloss over — and even mistrust — generalizations like “the best.”

- To counteract this, we added in concrete details referencing “fresh, tide-to-table fare.”

The next step was making the mission statement about more than just food.

- To do this, we called out the bigger picture (“honoring Long Island’s maritime history”).

Suddenly, mission statement #2 is not only about the restaurant — it’s also about *the reader*.

Customers now realize that eating here means **supporting the local fishing community and honoring Long Island’s maritime history** — which makes the restaurant far more appetizing.

Once you have your mission statement down, ask yourself:

**Does my mission statement:**

- Provide clarity and direction?
- Leave out jargon and generalizations?
- Differentiate my business from competitors?
- Involve more than just food?

If you were able to check off all of these boxes, *congratulations!* You now know **who you are, what you’ll be doing, and why you’ll be doing it** — which means you’re ready to set your mission in motion.

And by partnering with a delivery platform like [DoorDash](#), you can share your story (and delicious menu) with customers in no time.



CHAPTER 6

# Expanding beyond the storefront

---

The ins and outs of food delivery,  
and how it can be a driving  
component of your business

No matter their food preferences, diners of today crave convenience. The number one way to get hungry customers their food anytime, anywhere is delivery. (As you now know, any type of restaurant cuisine can be delivered.) Food delivery isn't rocket science, but you do need a partner to help you execute it successfully.

DoorDash simplifies the process — delivering not only food, but peace of mind (and profits). When merchants [sign up to be a DoorDash Partner](#), they can easily setup, manage, and customize their delivery options. DoorDash is a flexible and comprehensive marketing and food delivery solution provider.

## With DoorDash, you can:

### ✓ **Attract and delight new customers**

When you partner with DoorDash, not only does your delivery menu appear on the app, but it also gets featured on Google search.

### ✓ **Dip your toes into marketing**

The right food delivery app makes your business visible — and gets the word out. DoorDash has several built-in perks — like a complimentary photo shoot for your mouthwatering meals.

### ✓ **Improve operations**

DoorDash offers a merchant portal, so you can make choices to streamline delivery operations for your restaurant.

### ✓ **Get creative with your menu**

DoorDash gives you the freedom to update your menu, experiment with daily specials, and more — all without wasting food.

### ✓ **Increase your orders, without increasing fixed costs or expanding**

Approximately 92% of orders placed on DoorDash are incremental to a restaurant's customer base. This means that DoorDash is reaching entirely new customers — opening new doors for growth, opportunity, and repeat orders.

**Partnering with [DoorDash](#) can bring in new business — far beyond the reach of foot traffic alone.**

**Here are just a few more statistics backing that up:**

- [Chosen by 40% of new food delivery customers](#). With wider selection, lower costs, and standout marketing, DoorDash is chosen by new customers time and again.
- [Covers 80% of U.S. customers](#). In just a few short years, DoorDash has expanded 500% to reach 4,000 cities and 80% of Americans.

# The DoorDash Merchant Experience

Get a red carpet experience that helps you do your job better. These added features are just the cherry on top.



## Average 11-min delivery door-to-door

Our technology shortens delivery time from kitchen to customer. Delivery people (Dashers) carry insulated food bags, so salads, smoothies, and drinks stay cold – and soup, ramen, and burgers stay piping hot.



## Know that your customer service needs are handled

Just like we support you, we support your customers. We're your front lines of customer relations – freeing up time for your staff.



## Stay in control

You are in control every step of the way. Choose *your* menu items (including new dishes), *your* pricing, and *your* promotional plan.



## Get 24/7 support

Reach us 24/7. We can help with logistical questions, solve problems, or just listen if you want to talk. You are why we're here.

**We have more delighted merchants – and customers – than any of our competition.**

## WHAT OUR MERCHANTS SAY

"We have been able to add another revenue stream outside our four walls. It's great to bring guests what you offer if they don't want to come to you – and also market to a new customer base."

– **Kimberly Galban**, Publican Quality Meats

"DoorDash is bringing in more revenue and more customers."

– **Kay Tan**, Black Pepper and Banana Leaf



Kay Tan

# Cooking up success

Bringing your restaurant to life

Whether you're revitalizing an existing restaurant or starting from scratch, it's essential to articulate your new vision, map out your goals, and develop a deeper understanding of your customer base.

Now, you can:

- ✓ Identify your restaurant type and explore your niche
- ✓ Bring your concept together cohesively
- ✓ Evaluate your target market
- ✓ Declare your mission
- ✓ Partner with DoorDash to expand your business, from day one

With a prize-winning restaurant concept, a driving purpose, and an all-star delivery partner, you'll be able to build a loyal customer base and generate repeat business.

In future guides, we'll cover everything else — like how to streamline your operations, optimize your bottom line, build a winning team, master marketing techniques, and more.



# Get started with DoorDash



Visit [get.doordash.com](https://get.doordash.com) to sign up in less than 5 minutes.

1

Sign up and send us information about your restaurant.

2

Go live. You'll be up and running in 1 week.

3

Receive and fulfill orders.

[Set up your account today](#)

Or call **1-855-554-5779** (Monday-Saturday)



## About DoorDash

DoorDash is a global technology company that connects consumers with their favorite local and national businesses. Founded in 2013, DoorDash enables local businesses to address consumers' expectations of ease and immediacy and thrive in today's convenience economy. By building the last-mile logistics infrastructure for local commerce, DoorDash is bringing communities closer, one doorstep at a time. Get started at [get.doordash.com](https://get.doordash.com).

