

FREE CHECKLIST

Is Your Restaurant Ready for the 2026 FDA Food Code?

FDA published the 2026 Food Code on September 30, 2026. The temperatures didn't change; the paperwork did. Nothing changes in your kitchen until your state or local health department adopts the new edition, which usually takes years, but most of this is worth setting up now. Check off what you already have.

Restaurant

Checked by

Date

START HERE

- ☐ Find out which Food Code edition your health department enforces. Its website or your last inspection report will say; that's the version you're inspected against.
- ☐ Your person in charge is a certified food protection manager (§2-102.12), unless the health department exempts your operation as low risk.

PAPERWORK THE 2026 CODE ADDS

- ☐ **A written employee illness policy**, available on request (§2-501.11), for food employees, conditional employees (new hires offered a job), and the person in charge. It covers:
 - ☐ symptoms to report: diarrhea, vomiting, sore throat with fever, jaundice, infected wounds or cuts;
 - ☐ diagnoses to report: norovirus, hepatitis A, Shigella, typhoid fever, nontyphoidal Salmonella, Shiga toxin-producing E. coli;
 - ☐ exclusion or restriction from work, when a worker can return, and what you report to the health department.
- ☐ FDA Forms 1-A, 1-B, and 1-C (employee interview, reporting agreement, medical referral) as a starting point.
- ☐ **A written clean-up procedure for vomiting and diarrheal accidents** (§2-502.11): the steps that limit contamination and protect employees, customers, food, and surfaces.
- ☐ **A written food safety management system** (§8-201.15): written procedures, training plans, and monitoring records, kept current, used during all hours of operation, and shown to the inspector on request. Due within four years of your health department adopting the 2026 code, unless it exempts you as minimal risk.

MONITORING RECORDS TO START NOW

- | | |
|---|--|
| ☐ Food cooling log | ☐ Food receiving log |
| ☐ Hot and cold holding log | ☐ Sanitizer log |
| ☐ Fridge and freezer temperature log | ☐ Thermometer calibration log |

Free printable templates for all six: foodhandlergear.com/food-safety-log-templates.html

WHAT DIDN'T CHANGE

HOT HOLDING
135°F or above

COLD HOLDING
41°F or below

COOLING
135°F to 70°F in 2 hours; to 41°F in 6 hours total

REHEATING FOR HOT HOLDING
165°F for 15 seconds, within 2 hours

POULTRY
165°F

GROUND MEATS
155°F for 17 seconds

DATE MARKING
7 days at 41°F or below

HANDWASHING
At least 20 seconds

CLEANING AND DISINFECTING

- ☐ Your vomit clean-up kit has an EPA-registered disinfectant that's effective against norovirus.
- ☐ Equipment, surfaces, and utensils are disinfected after contact with vomit, feces, blood, or other body fluids, or during an outbreak (§4-1002.11), with the disinfectant used as its EPA label directs. Food-contact surfaces are rinsed with drinking water afterward unless the label says otherwise (§4-1003.11).
- ☐ A test kit for your disinfecting solution (§4-302.14(B)), and every test kit used as its label directs (§4-501.116(B)).
- ☐ Chemical sanitizers other than chlorine, iodine, or quat are used in water at 75°F or above, unless the label says otherwise (§4-501.114(E)).
- ☐ A covered trash can in every restroom, not just the women's (§5-501.17).

KITCHEN PRACTICES

- ☐ Food cooled no more than 2 inches deep is now a listed cooling method (§3-501.15). The cooling time limits didn't change.
- ☐ Double gloving only with health department approval (§3-304.15(B)): a loose outer glove over an intact inner glove, removed without peeling and thrown away after each task.
- ☐ Customers' containers are refilled only if they're designed for reuse, cleaned and sanitized first, and inspected by an employee (§3-304.17).
- ☐ Packaged food that comes with cooking instructions is cooked before it's served, unless the label says it can be eaten without cooking (§3-401.15(C)).

YOUR TEAM

- ☐ Staff know about food defense: protecting food from deliberate tampering, and reporting suspicious activity to the person in charge (§2-103.11(R)).
- ☐ The person in charge can explain the steps you take to prevent intentional contamination (§2-102.11(C)(18)).
- ☐ Staff know which symptoms and diagnoses to report, and to whom.
- ☐ Jewelry: still only a plain ring on hands and arms. A worker with a disability covered by the ADA may be allowed a medically necessary device (§2-303.11(C)).