

FREE CHECKLIST

Restaurant Self-Inspection Checklist

Walk your restaurant the way a health inspector does, during a busy shift. The sections follow the 56 items on FDA's model inspection report (Form 3-A in the 2026 Food Code), which many health departments use or adapt. Items 1–29 are the foodborne illness risk factors inspectors weigh most, so fix those first.

Restaurant

Checked by

Date

PERSON IN CHARGE · ITEMS 1–2

- ☐ A person in charge is on site during all hours of operation (§2-101.11) and can answer the inspector's questions about your menu and food safety (§2-102.11).
- ☐ The person in charge is a certified food protection manager and can show the certificate (§2-102.12).

EMPLOYEE HEALTH · ITEMS 3–5

- ☐ Every food employee and new hire knows which symptoms and illnesses to report, best shown with a signed reporting agreement such as FDA Form 1-B (§2-201.11).
- ☐ No one is working while vomiting or with diarrhea, jaundice, or a reportable illness; sick workers are sent home or kept off food as the code requires (§2-201.12).
- ☐ A written employee illness policy and a written vomit and diarrhea clean-up procedure are on hand (§2-501.11, §2-502.11).

HYGIENE AND HANDS · ITEMS 6–10

- ☐ Staff eat, drink, and smoke only in designated areas; a drink in the kitchen has a lid and is kept away from food (§2-401.11).
- ☐ Food is tasted with a clean utensil each time (§3-301.12).
- ☐ No one with a persistent cough, sneezing, or runny nose works with exposed food (§2-401.12).
- ☐ Hands are washed at a handwashing sink at the right times, such as after handling raw meat, before putting on gloves, and after breaks (§2-301.14, §2-301.15).
- ☐ No bare-hand contact with ready-to-eat food: gloves, tongs, or deli paper (§3-301.11).
- ☐ Every handwashing sink has soap, paper towels, and a handwashing sign, is used only for handwashing, and is never blocked (§5-205.11, §6-301.11, §6-301.12, §6-301.14).

SOURCE AND RECEIVING · ITEMS 11–14

- ☐ Food comes from approved, licensed suppliers, and you keep the invoices (§3-201.11).
- ☐ Deliveries are checked with a thermometer: cold TCS food at 41°F or below, hot food at 135°F or above (§3-202.11).
- ☐ Swollen or leaking cans, cans with a broken seal, and torn packages are rejected or set aside (§3-101.11, §3-202.15).
- ☐ Shellfish tags are kept for 90 days after the last shellfish from the container is served, and you have parasite-destruction records, or a supplier statement, for fish served raw or undercooked (§3-203.12, §3-402.12).

PROTECTION FROM CONTAMINATION · ITEMS 15–17

- ☐ Raw animal food is stored below and away from ready-to-eat food and unwashed produce, and raw meats are kept apart by type (§3-302.11).
- ☐ Single-use gloves are used for one task and changed between tasks (§3-304.15).
- ☐ Food-contact surfaces are washed, rinsed, and sanitized, and anything in use with TCS food at least every 4 hours (§4-602.11, §4-703.11). Slicers and can openers are clean when in use.
- ☐ Returned or previously served food isn't served again, and unsafe food is thrown out (§3-306.14, §3-701.11).

TIME AND TEMPERATURE · ITEMS 18–24

- ☐ Cooking temperatures are checked with a thermometer: poultry 165°F; ground meat 155°F for 17 seconds; fish and other meat 145°F for 15 seconds, with separate rules for roasts and whole steaks (§3-401.11).
- ☐ Food reheated for hot holding reaches 165°F within 2 hours (§3-403.11).
- ☐ Cooked food cools from 135°F to 70°F within 2 hours, and to 41°F within 6 hours total (§3-501.14).
- ☐ Hot food is held at 135°F or above; cold food at 41°F or below (§3-501.16).
- ☐ Ready-to-eat TCS food kept more than 24 hours is date-marked and used or thrown out within 7 days; the day it's made or opened is day 1 (§3-501.17, §3-501.18).
- ☐ If you hold food on time instead of temperature, there's a written procedure and each container is marked with its discard time (§3-501.19).

ADVISORY, CHEMICALS, PROCESSES · ITEMS 25–29

- ☐ Raw or undercooked animal foods on the menu are marked and footnoted with a consumer advisory (§3-603.11).
- ☐ If you serve a highly susceptible population, such as a nursing home or child care center: pasteurized eggs and juice where required, and no raw or undercooked animal foods or raw sprouts (§3-801.11).
- ☐ No sulfites on fresh fruits and vegetables served raw, and no unapproved additives (§3-202.12, §3-302.14).
- ☐ Chemicals are labeled and stored below and away from food, and sanitizer is no stronger than its label allows (§7-102.11, §7-201.11, §7-204.11).
- ☐ Smoking, curing, sous vide, reduced oxygen packaging, and other special processes have a variance or HACCP plan where required (§3-502.11, §3-502.12, §8-201.13).

FOOD AND EQUIPMENT · ITEMS 30-37

- ☐ Pasteurized eggs in uncooked egg dishes like Caesar dressing or hollandaise, unless the menu's consumer advisory covers them (§3-302.13).
- ☐ Water and ice from an approved source (§3-202.16, §5-101.11).
- ☐ Enough refrigeration for cooling and cold holding; food cools in shallow pans, ice baths, or another listed method (§3-501.15, §4-301.11).
- ☐ Vegetables cooked for hot holding reach 135°F (§3-401.13).
- ☐ Food thaws in the fridge, under cold running water at 70°F or below, in the microwave if it goes straight into cooking, or as part of cooking (§3-501.13).
- ☐ A food thermometer accurate to ±2°F is on hand and calibrated, and every refrigerator has a thermometer you can read (§4-203.11, §4-204.112, §4-502.11).
- ☐ Food out of its original package is labeled with its name, and customers are told in writing which major food allergens are in unpackaged food (§3-302.12, §3-602.12).

CONTAMINATION AND CLEANLINESS · ITEMS 38-46

- ☐ No sign of insects, rodents, or animals; outer doors and windows are closed or screened (§6-501.111, §6-202.15).
- ☐ Food is covered and stored at least 6 inches off the floor (§3-302.11, §3-305.11).
- ☐ Staff wear hair restraints and clean clothes; no jewelry on hands and arms except a plain ring; nails trimmed, and no polish or false nails unless wearing gloves (§2-402.11, §2-304.11, §2-303.11, §2-302.11).
- ☐ Wet wiping cloths are kept in sanitizer between uses (§3-304.14).
- ☐ Produce is washed before it's cut, cooked, or served (§3-302.15).
- ☐ In-use utensils are kept in the food with the handle out, in running water, in water at 135°F or above, or on a clean surface (§3-304.12).
- ☐ Clean dishes air-dry and are stored covered or upside down, 6 inches off the floor; single-use items stay in their packaging and are never reused (§4-901.11, §4-903.11, §4-502.13).
- ☐ Cut-resistant gloves are covered by a single-use glove for ready-to-eat food, and cloth gloves touch only food that will be cooked (§3-304.15).

FOUND AND FIXED

ITEM	WHAT WE FOUND	FIX, WHO, AND BY WHEN	DONE

EQUIPMENT, WATER, AND BUILDING · ITEMS 47-56

- ☐ Equipment is in good repair, and cutting boards are resurfaced or replaced when scratches won't clean (§4-501.11, §4-501.12).
- ☐ The dish machine or three-compartment sink reaches the right temperatures and sanitizer strength, checked with test strips (§4-302.14, §4-501.116).
- ☐ Shelves, handles, and equipment exteriors are clean (§4-602.13).
- ☐ Hot and cold water at every sink, with enough pressure (§5-103.11, §5-103.12).
- ☐ No plumbing leaks; air gaps or backflow devices where required (§5-202.13, §5-205.15).
- ☐ Sewage and wastewater drain properly, with no backups (§5-401.11, §5-403.11).
- ☐ Restrooms have soap, paper towels, toilet paper, a covered trash can, and a self-closing door (§5-501.17, §6-202.14, §6-302.11).
- ☐ Dumpsters and outdoor trash cans are covered, and the trash area is clean (§5-501.113, §5-501.115).
- ☐ Floors, walls, and ceilings are clean and in good repair, and mops hang to dry (§6-501.12, §6-501.16).
- ☐ Lights over food are shielded, hoods and vents are clean, and staff belongings stay in a designated area (§6-202.11, §6-501.14, §6-305.11).