

# How to Open a Restaurant

- Decide on a concept.** Successful restaurants are built upon concepts. One is famous for Cajun fried chicken and another for sweet gravy. An unusual but scrumptious concept will get you noticed.
- Examine the competition in your community.** Carefully consider what it will take to steer them from the competition's restaurants into yours.
- Formulate a business plan.** Formulate this plan meticulously. It may be your success story or your undoing from the beginning, as it is what will convince the investors or the bank to help you.
- If you have not already, **hire an attorney and an accountant.** They will save you many headaches down the road.
- If you are not using personal funds, submit your business plan to potential investors.*
- Pay your **franchise fees**, if applicable.
- Incorporate your company** or become an LLC. This is to protect you and your assets from personal liability.
- If you are building:*
  - Choose a location.**
  - Hire your architects and engineers.**
  - Acquire the necessary **building permits.**
  - Erect the building.**
- If you are not building, choose a location and purchase it or sign a lease.*
- Acquire **insurance.**
- Turn on the **utilities.**
- Furnish your office and order office equipment and supplies.** Make your office a place of calm and happy ambience. You will spend lots of time there, and you do not want it to be a drab, miserable place that you do not want to be.
- Acquire your **other licenses and permits.**
  - EIN (Employee Identification Number)** – You will need to get permits
  - Business license**
  - Liquor license**
  - Food service (health) permit**
  - Signage permits**
- Acquire **property security.**
- If you plan to, hire a restaurant consultant.*

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- ❑ **Begin planning your marketing strategy.** Unless you are a pro, hire a marketing professional. Marketing is paramount as to whether you make it or not. If the public does not know you are there, they can not come and dine.
- ❑ **Post opportunities for employment.**
- ❑ Apply window, outdoor, and any other **signage**.
- ❑ Have the **landscaping** done. This is also of great importance. This is the first thing patrons see when they pull up to your establishment. First impressions are everything.
- ❑ Order a point-of-sale system or **POS system**. This will be indispensable. Get one.
- ❑ Buy or lease your **kitchen equipment**.
- ❑ **Furnish and decorate your dining room.** This is one place a restaurant consultant may be beneficial. You may think something is “cool” but they may know from experience that the public finds it antiquated.
- ❑ **Order smallwares** for the entire restaurant.
- ❑ **Order other non-food items**, like bottles for table sanitizing solution, hand soap and hand sanitizer, dispensers for both.
- ❑ **Choose a main food vendor.** While you are interviewing the representatives, looking over brochures, and sifting through information to decide upon a food vendor, keep this in mind. It is good to maintain a good relationship with all the food vendors. First, there may be times when your main vendor is out of something temporarily, but the other vendor can get it for you. Second, if you find that the first vendor is not doing a particularly good job for you, you may end up wanting to make a change in vendors.
- ❑ **Choose other services**, like trash pick-up, grease trap pumping and cleaning, and linen service.
- ❑ **Start staffing** your restaurant. Prepare job descriptions, and go ahead and prepare rules regarding attendance, tardiness, and on-the-job issues and reprimand. Chart out the days of the week with projected volume and decide upon staffing for every shift.
- ❑ **Plan procedures for staff training.** They will need to know lots of rules to keep you out of trouble with the ABC board and the health inspector. Plus, you do not want to make your customers ill with unsafe food-handling practices. They need to be well-abreast of safety procedures (you can

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contact OSHA [Occupational Safety and Health Administration]) for all the safety information you will need. *This is of utmost importance.* You will also need to make sure they have information posted from the US Department of Labor. *This is mandatory.* They will need to know how to count money back without a computer in case your power goes out. They will also need to be well-trained in customer service.

- ❑ **Prepare and post lists and instructions** for anything you want your staff to know, including cleaning procedures, food handling, food production (when and how), portion sizes for menu plates with photos, temperatures for your outgoing food items, refrigerators, and freezers (you will need to put thermometers in their relative places), and more. Any piece of information regarding which you do not want to hear from your employees, “I did not know,” prepare lists or instructions and post them.
- ❑ You are probably far enough along now to get your **food service (health) permit**. A health inspector will have to come and inspect your restaurant front and back. They will give you a grade of A, B, or C. You will want to maintain an A if you want people to keep coming to your restaurant. Remember, do not be lackadaisical. The inspectors like to make surprise visits.
- ❑ **Send your menus to the printer.** Your menus should be ready by now. Make sure you charged enough to make a profit sometime soon but not too much that the customers will not pay the prices. Use bright, vivid photos. Make their mouth water with one look.
- ❑ **Announce, post, and publish opening date and hours of operation.** Make sure to post it on Google and any number of other sites.
- ❑ **Hire the rest of your staff.**
- ❑ **Train your staff.** Training your staff is so important. It is crucial to your success. If they do not know what to do, they will not, can not do it, and if they do not, it reflects on you.
- ❑ Send your employees for **food and alcohol safety certificates.**
- ❑ **Order food, beverage, and paper products**, including to-go items, and do not forget paper for the POS system.
- ❑ **Host a soft opening.** Do this. This will reveal breakdowns in the systems so that you can fix them before the grand opening. This is your trial run. Do not skip this step.
- ❑ Open the doors for the **grand opening**, and see your dream come true.