

THE RESTAURANT OWNER'S PLAYBOOK

THE OWNER'S BINDER

Open it. Run it. Grow it.

Checklists, logs and step-by-step procedures for independent restaurants. Print what you need, put it in a binder, and keep it in the kitchen.

Restaurant _____

Owner / manager _____

Health department phone _____

Refrigeration repair phone _____



START HERE

HOW TO USE THIS BINDER

STLFSE
OWNER'S BINDER

TOOLS

Forms you use over and over, several times a day: logs, checklists, prep lists. Sections A–C. Make copies, keep them on a clipboard, file the finished ones.

GUIDES

Step-by-step procedures (SOPs) you look up daily or weekly and train with. Section D. Post them where the work happens.

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TOOLS

EVERY SHIFT

Forms your crew fills out every shift, several times a day. Copy them, put them on a clipboard, and file the finished sheets. Inspectors often ask to see logs.

A1 Opening Checklist: Kitchen

A2 Opening Checklist: Dining Room

A3 Closing Checklist: Kitchen

A4 Closing Checklist: Dining Room

A5 Line Check

A6 Prep List & Pars

A7 Cooler & Freezer Temperature Log

A8 Hot & Cold Holding Log

A9 Cooling Log

A10 Receiving Log

A11 Sanitizer Test Log

A12 Restroom Check Log

A13 Ticket Time Tracker

A14 Shift Handoff / Manager Log

A15 Waste Log

A16 Daily Cleaning Checklist: Equipment



TOOL · EVERY SHIFT

OPENING CHECKLIST: KITCHEN

STLFSE
OWNER'S BINDER**Who:** Opening cook or manager**Week of** _____ **Manager** _____

Check each box when it's done. Initials row at the bottom: whoever finished the list that day.

TASK	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
ARRIVE							
Lights, hood fans and make-up air on	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Check walk-in, reach-ins and freezers; write temps on the temperature log	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Look for anything that came in or broke overnight (leaks, pests, alarms)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
EQUIPMENT							
Turn on and preheat grill, fryers, ovens, steam table	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Fryer oil level and condition checked	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Dish machine filled and up to temp; three-compartment sink set up	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Sanitizer buckets made and tested with strips	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
HAND SINKS							
Every hand sink has soap, paper towels and a trash can	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Nothing stored in hand sinks	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
FOOD							
Receive deliveries using the receiving log	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Pull thawing items; check anything thawed overnight	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Prep list written from pars	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Station cards set; line check done before first ticket	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Initials							



TOOL · EVERY SHIFT

OPENING CHECKLIST: DINING ROOM

STLFSE
OWNER'S BINDER**Who:** Opening server or manager**Week of** _____ **Manager** _____

Check each box when it's done. Initials row at the bottom: whoever finished the list that day.

TASK	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
ROOM							
Doors unlocked at open, sign flipped, lights and music set	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Floors swept, no spills or trip hazards	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Tables and chairs wiped, level and in floor-plan position	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Restrooms checked and stocked (restroom log)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
STATIONS							
Silverware rolled to par	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Condiments full and wiped; caddies stocked	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ice bin full, scoop stored handle-up outside the ice	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Coffee, tea and drink station set	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
To-go supplies stocked	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
SERVICE							
POS on, printers have paper, card readers work	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Reservations and big parties checked	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Specials and 86 list from the kitchen	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Pre-shift huddle held	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Initials							



TOOL · EVERY SHIFT

CLOSING CHECKLIST: KITCHEN

STLFSE
OWNER'S BINDER**Who:** Closing cook or manager**Week of** _____ **Manager** _____

Check each box when it's done. Initials row at the bottom: whoever finished the list that day.

TASK	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
FOOD							
Leftovers cooled using the cooling log, covered, labeled and dated	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Old product tossed; FIFO rotated	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Thawing items moved to the walk-in for tomorrow	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Prep notes written for the opener	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
EQUIPMENT							
Grill scraped and cleaned; burners off	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Fryers off; oil filtered or covered per fryer manual	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ovens, steam table and warmers off and wiped	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Hood filters cleaned on their schedule	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
CLEAN							
Cutting boards, tools and pans washed, rinsed, sanitized and air-dried	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Line and prep surfaces cleaned and sanitized	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Floors swept and mopped; mats cleaned	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Trash and recycling out; lids closed	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
LOCK UP							
Final cooler and freezer temps logged	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Walk-in doors shut tight	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Gas, water and back door checked	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Initials							



TOOL · EVERY SHIFT

CLOSING CHECKLIST: DINING ROOM

STLFSE
OWNER'S BINDER**Who:** Closing server or manager**Week of** _____ **Manager** _____

Check each box when it's done. Initials row at the bottom: whoever finished the list that day.

TASK	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
ROOM							
Tables, chairs and booths wiped; high chairs cleaned	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Floors swept and mopped	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Restrooms cleaned and restocked	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
STATIONS							
Condiments married only if your code allows; otherwise emptied and washed	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ice bin emptied or covered per your routine	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Coffee and drink equipment cleaned	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Side work list done and initialed	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
MONEY							
Drawers counted and dropped (cash drawer SOP)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Tips paid out and recorded	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Sales report printed or saved	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
LOCK UP							
Doors and windows locked, lights off, alarm set	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Initials							

Who: Chef or manager, before each service

Date _____ Service (lunch / dinner) _____ Checked by _____

Walk every station before doors open. Temp it, look at it, taste it. Fix problems before the first ticket.

[illegible]

Remember: Cold food 41°F or below. Hot food 135°F or above.

Who: Chef or opener

Date _____ Day of week _____ Written by _____

Par = how much you want on hand. Count what you have, subtract it from par, and prep the difference.

[illegible]



COOLER & FREEZER TEMPERATURE LOG

STLFSE

Week of _____ Unit name / location _____

[illegible]

Who: Line cooks, during service

Date _____ Station _____

Probe food in the steam table, rail and cold wells. Check at least every 4 hours; every 2 hours gives you time to fix a problem before food has to be tossed.

[illegible]

Remember: Hot: 135°F or above. Cold: 41°F or below. Out of range? Reheat, re-chill, or toss, and write down what you did.

Who: Whoever cools the food

Date _____

Cooked food must drop from 135°F to 70°F within 2 hours, then to 41°F within 4 more hours (6 hours total). Use shallow pans, ice baths or ice wands.

[illegible]

Remember: Missed 70°F at 2 hours? Reheat to 165°F and start over once, or throw it out. Missed 41°F at 6 hours? Throw it out.



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Week of _____

[illegible]

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Date _____ Restroom _____

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Who: Expo or manager, during service

Date	Service	Your target (minutes)
------	---------	-----------------------

Spot-check tickets during a rush. Ticket time = minutes from order to food in the window. Rising times show which station needs help.

[illegible]



TOOL · EVERY SHIFT

SHIFT HANDOFF / MANAGER LOG

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Who: Manager or shift lead

Date _____ Shift _____ Manager _____

Write it down so the next shift doesn't learn it the hard way.

TOPIC	NOTES
Sales / covers	
86'd items	
Equipment problems	
Staff (call-outs, issues)	
Guest issues & comps	
Deliveries short or wrong	
Needs ordering	
Tell the next shift	

Who: Anyone who throws food away

Week of _____

Every pan of tossed food is money. A week of this log shows what to prep less of.

[illegible]



TOOL · EVERY SHIFT

DAILY CLEANING CHECKLIST: EQUIPMENT

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OWNER'S BINDER

Who: Assigned by station

Week of _____ Manager _____

Check each box when it's done. Initials row at the bottom: whoever finished the list that day.

TASK	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
COOKING LINE							
Grill or flattop scraped, cleaned and seasoned	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Burner grates and drip trays emptied	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Fryer baskets washed; oil filtered per manual	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ovens wiped out; spills removed	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Steam table wells drained and wiped	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
REFRIGERATION							
Reach-in and lowboy gaskets wiped	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Spills cleaned from shelves and floors	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Door handles cleaned and sanitized	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
PREP & DISH							
Slicer and mixer taken apart, washed, sanitized (when used)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Cutting boards washed, sanitized, stored on edge	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Dish machine drained, screens cleaned	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Can opener blade cleaned	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
AREA							
Hood filters cleaned if on daily schedule	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Floor drains clear	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Trash cans washed if dirty	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Initials							

B

TOOLS

WEEKLY & MONTHLY

Deeper cleaning, counts and checks. Hang them in the office and assign an owner for each line.

B1 Weekly Cleaning Checklist

B2 Monthly Cleaning & Maintenance Checklist

B3 Equipment Service & Maintenance Calendar

B4 Inventory Count Sheet

B5 Side Work Chart

B6 Pest Sighting & Control Log

B7 Pre-Inspection Self-Check

**Who:** Assigned staff**Week of** _____ **Checked by** _____

ITEM	OWNER	DONE (DATE)	INITIALS
KITCHEN			
Walk-in floor, walls and shelves cleaned			
Reach-ins emptied and shelves washed			
Fryer boiled out (or per manual)			
Oven interiors deep-cleaned			
Behind and under cooking line cleaned			
Dry storage swept; shelves wiped			
Ice machine bin and scoop holder cleaned and sanitized			
Floor drains and grates scrubbed			
DINING ROOM			
Baseboards and chair legs wiped			
Windows and door glass cleaned			
Menus wiped or replaced			
High chairs and booster seats deep-cleaned			



MONTHLY CLEANING & MAINTENANCE CHECKLIST

Who: Manager

Month _____ Checked by _____

ITEM	OWNER	DONE (DATE)	INITIALS
REFRIGERATION			
Condenser coils brushed or vacuumed (dust on coils kills compressors)			
Door gaskets checked for tears and gaps			
Fan guards and evaporator area wiped			
Thermometers checked in ice water (should read 32°F)			
COOKING			
Pilot lights and burners checked for even flame			
Fryer thermostats checked against a probe			
Gas hoses and quick-disconnects checked for wear			
OTHER			
Ice machine descaled and sanitized per manual			
Water filters checked or changed			
Fire extinguishers in place, tags current, gauge in green			
First aid kit restocked			
Pest control service done and report filed			
Grease trap service on schedule			

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BINDER

Year _____

[illegible]

Who: Same person, same day, every week

Count date _____ Counted by _____ Area _____

Count in the same order every time (walk-in, freezer, dry storage, bar). Counting the same way makes it fast and keeps numbers honest.

[illegible]

Who: Manager posts it; staff initial it

Week of _____

Side work is the non-serving work each shift owes the next one. Written down, nobody argues about it.

[illegible]

Who: Anyone who sees a pest; manager follows up

Pest control company _____ Phone _____

Write down every sighting, even one. Patterns tell your pest company where to look. Keep service reports behind this page.

[illegible]

**Who:** Owner or manager, monthly or before an inspection

Date _____ Checked by _____

ITEM	OK	FIX	FIXED (DATE)
PEOPLE			
Manager on site knows the food safety basics in this binder			
Staff wash hands at the right times; no bare hands on ready-to-eat food			
Employee illness policy signed and posted			
No eating or open drinks at prep areas			
TEMPERATURES			
Coolers 41°F or below; logs filled in			
Hot holding 135°F or above			
Cooling log in use			
Probe thermometers on hand and accurate			
STORAGE			
Everything labeled and dated			
Raw meat stored below ready-to-eat food			
Food 6 inches off the floor			
Chemicals stored away from and below food			
CLEANING			
Sanitizer at the right strength (test log)			
Hand sinks stocked and only used for hands			
Ice scoop stored outside the ice			
No pest activity			
Vomit and diarrhea cleanup kit stocked			
PAPERWORK			
Permits and licenses posted			
Food handler or manager cards on file if required			
Logs kept for the time your health department requires			



TOOLS

PEOPLE

Hiring and training forms. One set per employee, kept in their file.

C1 New Employee Checklist

C2 Employee Illness Reporting Agreement

C3 Training Sign-Off Sheet

C4 Station Card (Mise en Place)



NEW EMPLOYEE CHECKLIST

Who: Trainer and new hire

Employee name _____ Position _____ Date hired _____ Trainer _____

Work through every line with the new hire. ★ = cover on their first trial shift. Trainer and employee initial when each line is done.

ITEM	1ST SHIFT	DATE COVERED	TRAINER
1. WALK-THROUGH TOUR			
Front of house: floor layout, sections, table numbers, seat numbers	★		
Kitchen: each station and who works it	★		
Storage: dry storage, walk-in, ice machine, office, coat area	★		
Restrooms: check schedule and closing cleaning	★		
Server stations and pre-shift board	★		
Exits, fire extinguishers, hood suppression pull, first aid kit	★		
Parking and employee entrance	★		
Meet the team: manager on duty, chef, bartender	★		
Outside storage, extra coolers			
Lighting panels, music, thermostat			
Reservation and online-order screens			
2. PAPERWORK AND POLICIES			
Tax and employment forms (W-4, I-9)	★		
Food handler card or required training, if your area requires it			
Illness reporting agreement signed (C2)	★		
Handbook received; highlighted policies reviewed and signed			
Payroll schedule and how card tips are paid	★		
Tip pool or tip sharing rules	★		
Attendance, calling out, time-off requests			
Where the schedule is posted; training schedule			
Conduct and harassment policy; who to report to			
3. FOOD SAFETY			
Handwashing (SOP D1) and no bare hands on ready-to-eat food (D9)	★		
Allergen orders (D12)	★		
Menu walk-through and kitchen terms			
Your farms and vendors (the story for guests)			



Who: Trainer and new hire

ITEM	1ST SHIFT	DATE COVERED	TRAINER
4. SERVICE SKILLS			
Role handout (server, server assistant, bar)			
Steps of service and target times (D16)			
Side work by station (B5)	★		
POS: open a check, seat numbers, modifiers, splits, voids			
Answering the phone and taking reservations			
Takeout and pickup orders			
Gift cards; patio service			
5. BEVERAGE			
Current wine list, starting with by-the-glass pours			
Shadow the bartender: wine, tasting, seasonal cocktails			
Responsible alcohol service: checking IDs, cutting someone off			
6. EVENTS AND TRIAL PERIOD			
Special events: wine dinners, private parties	★		
Trial shifts: how many, and who signs off			
30-day check-in with manager			

Employee signature _____ Date _____ Trainer signature _____

Date _____



EMPLOYEE ILLNESS REPORTING AGREEMENT

Who: Every employee signs at hire

To protect our guests and coworkers, I agree to tell the manager on duty before I start work if I have any of the symptoms or illnesses below, or if I've been exposed to someone who has one of the illnesses.

SYMPTOMS I MUST REPORT

- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Sore throat with fever
- Yellow skin or eyes (jaundice)
- Infected cut or burn on hands or arms

ILLNESSES I MUST REPORT IF A DOCTOR DIAGNOSES ME

- Norovirus
- Hepatitis A
- Shigella
- E. coli (Shiga toxin-producing)
- Salmonella (including typhoid)

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

- With vomiting or diarrhea, I stay home until at least 24 hours after my symptoms stop.
- With a diagnosed illness above, I stay out of work until the health department or manager says I can return.
- With an infected cut or burn, I keep it covered with a bandage and glove, or I'm assigned work away from food.
- The manager may assign me to non-food tasks or send me home. This is about food safety, not discipline.

Employee name (print) _____ Employee signature _____ Date _____

Manager signature _____ Date _____

Source: Oregon Dept. of Agriculture employee illness fact sheet; FDA Food Code. Many health departments publish their own form; use theirs if required.

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Employee _____ Position _____ Start date _____

[illegible]



STATION CARD (MISE EN PLACE)

Who: Chef fills one out for each station

Station name _____ Shift _____ Written by _____

Everything a cook needs before the first ticket. Fill it in once, laminate it, and hang it at the station. Pars are amounts for one service.

COLD RAIL / LOWBOY

ITEM	PAN SIZE	PAR

HOT SIDE / STEAM TABLE

ITEM	PAN SIZE	PAR

TOOLS & SMALLWARES

CHECKS BEFORE SERVICE

- | | |
|---|---|
| ☐ Temps logged | ☐ Thermometer at station |
| ☐ Labels and dates current | ☐ Towels, gloves, plates stocked |
| ☐ Sanitizer bucket made and tested | ☐ Equipment on and at temp |

Tape a photo of the finished station here.
"Make it look like the picture."



GUIDES

HOW WE DO IT (SOPS)

Standard operating procedures: one job, written step by step, so it gets done the same way no matter who's working. Train with them, post them where the work happens, and look them up when you're unsure.

D1 Handwashing

D2 Receiving a Delivery

D3 Storage, Labels & FIFO

D4 Thawing Food Safely

D5 Cooking Temperatures

D6 Cooling Hot Food

D7 Reheating for Hot Holding

D8 Hot & Cold Holding

D9 No Bare Hands & Glove Use

D10 Cleaning & Sanitizing Surfaces

D11 Three-Compartment Sink

D12 Allergen Orders

D13 Employee Illness

D14 Vomit & Diarrhea Cleanup

D15 Ice Handling & Ice Machine Care

D16 Steps of Service: Seat to Goodbye

D17 Ticket Flow, Expo & the Grill Clock

D18 Fryer Oil Care

D19 Hoods, Filters & Fire Safety

D20 Power Outage or Cooler Failure

D21 Handling a Guest Complaint

D22 Closing the Cash Drawer

D23 Write Your Own SOP



WHO	WHEN	YOU NEED
Everyone	See the list below	Hand sink, soap, paper towels

Why it matters. Hands spread more foodborne illness than anything else in a kitchen. Gloves and hand sanitizer do not replace handwashing.

STEPS

- 1 Wet hands and forearms with warm running water.
- 2 Apply soap.
- 3 Scrub hands, between fingers, under nails and up the forearms for 10 to 15 seconds.
- 4 Rinse well under running water.
- 5 Dry with a paper towel or hand dryer.
- 6 Turn off the faucet with the paper towel, not clean hands. The whole wash takes at least 20 seconds.

WASH HANDS

- Before starting work and before putting on gloves
- After using the restroom
- After touching raw meat, poultry or seafood, and before touching ready-to-eat food
- After handling dirty dishes or equipment
- After touching your face, hair, phone or body
- After eating, drinking, smoking, coughing or sneezing
- After taking out trash or handling chemicals
- Every time you change tasks

Done looks like: Hand sinks stocked and clear. You see people washing at every task change.

Posted / reviewed by _____ Date _____

Source: Minnesota Dept. of Health handwashing fact sheet; FDA Food Code. Your local code may differ; it is the final word.

WHO	WHEN	YOU NEED
Opening cook or manager	Every delivery, before the driver leaves	Probe thermometer, invoice, receiving log, labels, marker

Why it matters. Once you sign, problems become your problem. Bad product that gets in the door gets served or thrown away on your dime.

STEPS

- 1 Clear space in the walk-in and freezer before the truck arrives.
- 2 Count every case against the invoice.
- 3 Probe cold items between packages or in a sample. Cold food must be 41°F or below; shell eggs 45°F or below.
- 4 Check frozen food is frozen solid: no soft spots, large ice crystals, or stains that show it thawed and refroze.
- 5 Look for damage: torn boxes, leaks, pest signs, swollen or deeply dented cans, bad smells.
- 6 Refuse anything that fails. Write shorts and refusals on the invoice and have the driver initial it.
- 7 Put away cold and frozen first, then dry goods. Raw meat goes below ready-to-eat food.
- 8 Rotate FIFO: older stock forward, new stock behind. Label and date anything you open or repack.
- 9 Fill in the receiving log.

Done looks like: Signed invoice in the office, nothing left on the floor, every item stored and dated.

Posted / reviewed by _____ Date _____

Source: North Dakota Dept. of Health receiving guidance; FDA Food Code. Your local code may differ; it is the final word.

WHO	WHEN	YOU NEED
Everyone	Every time food goes into storage	Labels or tape, marker, food-safe containers with lids

Why it matters. Labels and FIFO keep old food off plates, cut waste, and are one of the first things inspectors look at.

STEPS

- 1 Label every container: what it is, the date made or opened, and the use-by date.
- 2 Ready-to-eat food that needs refrigeration and is made in-house is good for 7 days at 41°F or below. Count the day it was made as day 1.
- 3 Put new product behind or under older product. Use the oldest first (first in, first out).
- 4 Store top to bottom: ready-to-eat food on top, then seafood, whole cuts of beef and pork, ground meats, and poultry on the bottom.
- 5 Keep food covered and at least 6 inches off the floor.
- 6 Store chemicals away from and below food, never above it.
- 7 Toss anything past its date or with no label.

Done looks like: Every container labeled, oldest in front, raw meat below everything ready to eat.

Posted / reviewed by _____ Date _____

Source: Texas DSHS cooling fact sheet (7-day date marking); FDA Food Code. Your local code may differ; it is the final word.

WHO Prep cooks	WHEN Whenever frozen food is used	YOU NEED Sheet pans, prep sink, thermometer
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Why it matters. Thawing on the counter lets the outside of food warm into the danger zone while the middle is still frozen.

STEPS

- 1 Best: thaw in the walk-in at 41°F or below. Plan ahead; large items can take 2 days or more. Put a pan under it and keep it on the bottom shelf.
- 2 Under cold running water: 70°F or colder, in a clean and sanitized prep sink (never a hand sink), for no more than 2 hours.
- 3 In the microwave: only if the food is cooked right away.
- 4 As part of cooking: frozen burgers, vegetables and fries can go straight on the heat. Check the final temperature.
- 5 Never thaw on the counter or in standing warm water.

Done looks like: Tomorrow's thawing is on the bottom shelf of the walk-in before you close tonight.

WHO Line cooks	WHEN Every protein, every time	YOU NEED Calibrated probe thermometer, sanitizer wipes
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Why it matters. Color and touch can't tell you if food is safe. A thermometer can.

STEPS

- 1 Probe the thickest part of the food, away from bone and the pan.
- 2 Wipe and sanitize the probe between items.
- 3 Hold the temperature for the time shown below.
- 4 Calibrate thermometers weekly in ice water: they should read 32°F.

FOOD	MINIMUM INTERNAL TEMPERATURE
Chicken, turkey, duck; stuffed meats, fish or pasta	165°F (instant)
Ground beef, pork and other ground meat (burgers); ground fish	155°F for 17 seconds
Steaks, chops, roasts, fish, shellfish	145°F for 15 seconds
Eggs cooked to order for immediate service	145°F for 15 seconds
Eggs cooked and held for later service	155°F for 17 seconds
Fruits, vegetables, grains and beans for hot holding	135°F
Leftovers reheated for hot holding	165°F for 15 seconds, within 2 hours

IF A GUEST ORDERS A BURGER OR STEAK LESS DONE

- Your menu must carry a consumer advisory about undercooked food. Ask your health department for the wording they require.

Done looks like: Every cook has a working thermometer and uses it without being told.

Posted / reviewed by _____ Date _____

Source: Fairfax County Health Dept. cooking and reheating chart; FDA Food Code. Your local code may differ; it is the final word.

WHO Cooks	WHEN Any cooked food saved for later	YOU NEED Shallow pans, ice bath or ice wands, thermometer, cooling log
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Why it matters. Food cooling slowly in a deep pot is one of the most common causes of foodborne illness outbreaks.

STEPS

- 1 Start the cooling log as soon as food comes off the heat.
- 2 Divide big batches into shallow pans, about 2 inches deep, or smaller portions.
- 3 Use an ice bath, ice wand or blast chiller. Stir to move heat out.
- 4 Leave pans uncovered and unstacked in the walk-in until cold.
- 5 Stage 1: from 135°F to 70°F within 2 hours.
- 6 Stage 2: from 70°F to 41°F within 4 more hours. Six hours total.
- 7 Food that misses either stage gets thrown out. Do not put a hot stockpot straight into the walk-in.

Done looks like: Cooling log filled in with times and temps; no deep pots of warm food in the cooler.

Posted / reviewed by _____ Date _____

Source: Texas DSHS cooling methods fact sheet; FDA Food Code. Your local code may differ; it is the final word.



WHO Cooks	WHEN Leftovers going back on the line	YOU NEED Stove, oven or microwave; thermometer
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Why it matters. Leftovers cooled and reheated slowly can grow bacteria the steam table won't kill.

STEPS

- 1 Reheat leftovers on the stove, oven or microwave, never in the steam table.
- 2 Bring food to 165°F for 15 seconds.
- 3 Get there within 2 hours. If it takes longer, throw it out.
- 4 Commercially made, ready-to-eat food (canned chili, packaged soup) only needs 135°F.
- 5 Move to hot holding at 135°F or above.

Done looks like: Every reheated item is probed and logged before it hits the steam table.

Posted / reviewed by _____ Date _____

Source: Fairfax County Health Dept. reheating guidance; FDA Food Code. Your local code may differ; it is the final word.



WHO Line cooks	WHEN Whenever food is held for service	YOU NEED Steam table, cold rail, thermometer, holding log
--------------------------	--	---

Why it matters. Between 41°F and 135°F (the danger zone), bacteria grow fast.

STEPS

- 1 Hot food at 135°F or above. Steam tables keep food hot; they don't heat cold food fast enough.
- 2 Cold food at 41°F or below. Don't overfill cold wells above the fill line.
- 3 Probe and log at least every 4 hours; every 2 hours gives you time to fix it.
- 4 Out of range for less than your check interval? Reheat to 165°F or re-chill. Unsure how long? Throw it out.
- 5 Stir and cover food to hold temperature evenly.

Done looks like: Holding log filled in; every item in range at every check.

Posted / reviewed by _____ Date _____

Source: FDA Food Code; Texas DSHS time as a public health control guidance. Your local code may differ; it is the final word.



WHO	WHEN	YOU NEED
Everyone touching food	Any ready-to-eat food	Gloves, tongs, deli paper, scoops

Why it matters. Ready-to-eat food (salads, bread, garnish, cooked food) won't be cooked again, so anything on hands goes straight to the guest.

STEPS

- 1 Never touch ready-to-eat food with bare hands. Use gloves, tongs, deli paper or utensils.
- 2 Wash hands before putting on gloves.
- 3 Change gloves when they tear, get dirty, when you switch tasks, after touching raw meat, and at least every 4 hours of continuous use.
- 4 Gloves are single-use. Never wash or reuse them.
- 5 Bandage cuts and wear a glove over the bandage.

Done looks like: Gloves and tongs at every station; no bare hands on plates.

Posted / reviewed by _____ Date _____

Source: FDA Food Code. Your local code may differ; it is the final word.

WHO Everyone	WHEN After each task, when switching raw to ready-to-eat, and at least every 4 hours	YOU NEED Detergent, sanitizer bucket, test strips, towels
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Why it matters. Cleaning removes dirt. Sanitizing kills germs. You need both, in that order.

STEPS

- 1 Scrape and remove food.
- 2 Wash with detergent and water.
- 3 Rinse with clean water.
- 4 Sanitize with a towel from the sanitizer bucket. Leave the surface wet for the contact time on the label.
- 5 Let it air dry. Don't wipe it dry.
- 6 Test buckets with strips when made; change them when dirty or out of range. Log it on the sanitizer test log.
- 7 Store wet towels in sanitizer between uses, never on the counter or your shoulder.

Done looks like: Buckets at every station, in range, logged.

Posted / reviewed by _____ Date _____

Source: Wisconsin DATCP three-compartment sink guide; FDA Food Code. Your local code may differ; it is the final word.

WHO Dishwasher or anyone washing by hand	WHEN Pots, pans and tools that don't go in the machine	YOU NEED Three-compartment sink, detergent, sanitizer, test strips, drying rack
--	--	---

Why it matters. Dishes that look clean can still carry germs if they skip the sanitize step or the sanitizer is too weak.

STEPS

- 1 Clean and sanitize all three sinks and the drainboards first.
- 2 Scrape and pre-rinse dishes.
- 3 Sink 1, wash: warm water and detergent. Change it when suds die or water is dirty.
- 4 Sink 2, rinse: clean water to remove soap and food. Change it when dirty or sudsy.
- 5 Sink 3, sanitize: mix to the label, test with a strip (chlorine usually 50–100 ppm, quat 150–400 ppm), and soak for the label's contact time.
- 6 Air dry upside down on a rack. Never towel dry.

Done looks like: Test strip reading written on the sanitizer log; dishes drying on racks, not towels.

Posted / reviewed by _____ Date _____

Source: Wisconsin DATCP three-compartment sink guide. Your local code may differ; it is the final word.

WHO Servers, cooks, expo	WHEN Every time a guest mentions an allergy	YOU NEED Ingredient list for every dish, allergen flag on the POS, clean tools
---------------------------------------	--	---

Why it matters. A mistake can put a guest in the hospital. Allergic reactions can start right away or hours later.

STEPS

- 1 Server: take every allergy seriously and write it on the ticket using the POS allergy button or flag.
- 2 Server: tell the kitchen in person too. Never guess about ingredients; check the ingredient list or ask the chef.
- 3 Kitchen: one cook handles the order. Wash hands, change gloves, and use clean, sanitized tools, boards and pans.
- 4 Kitchen: watch for hidden allergens in sauces, dressings, fryer oil shared with breaded items, and garnish.
- 5 Expo: check the plate and keep it separate. The person who confirmed it runs it to the table and names it.
- 6 If you can't make it safely, say so. That's better than a reaction.

THE 9 MAJOR FOOD ALLERGENS

- Milk
- Eggs
- Fish
- Crustacean shellfish (shrimp, crab, lobster)
- Tree nuts
- Peanuts
- Wheat
- Soy
- Sesame

Done looks like: Every dish has an up-to-date ingredient list a server can read in 30 seconds.

Posted / reviewed by _____ Date _____

Source: Minnesota Dept. of Health major food allergens fact sheet. Your local code may differ; it is the final word.

WHO Manager on duty	WHEN Any employee who is sick or reports symptoms	YOU NEED Signed illness agreement (C2), health department phone number
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Why it matters. One sick cook can make dozens of guests sick. Norovirus spreads easily through food.

STEPS

- 1 Ask employees at the start of each shift if they have any of the symptoms below.
- 2 Send home anyone with vomiting or diarrhea. They stay out until at least 24 hours after symptoms stop.
- 3 Sore throat with fever, or yellow skin or eyes: send home and follow your health department's guidance.
- 4 Infected cut or burn on hands or arms: cover it with a bandage and glove, or keep them off food.
- 5 Diagnosed with one of the five illnesses below: keep them out and call your health department. They decide when the person can return.
- 6 If someone gets sick at work, follow SOP D14 for cleanup.

SYMPTOMS EMPLOYEES MUST REPORT

- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Sore throat with fever
- Yellow skin or eyes (jaundice)
- Infected cut or burn on hands or arms

ILLNESSES EMPLOYEES MUST REPORT

- Norovirus
- Hepatitis A
- Shigella
- E. coli (Shiga toxin-producing)
- Salmonella (including typhoid)

Done looks like: Illness agreement signed by every employee and posted in the kitchen.

Posted / reviewed by _____ Date _____

Source: Oregon Dept. of Agriculture employee illness fact sheet; FDA Food Code. Your local code may differ; it is the final word.

WHO	WHEN	YOU NEED
Trained staff only	Anyone gets sick in the restaurant	Cleanup kit: disposable gloves, mask, gown or apron, shoe covers, paper towels, absorbent powder, trash bags, bleach or an EPA-registered norovirus disinfectant

Why it matters. Norovirus can float in the air from vomit and survive on surfaces. Regular sanitizer is not strong enough.

STEPS

- 1 Get everyone away from the area, including staff not cleaning it. Stop food prep nearby.
- 2 Put on gloves, mask, gown and shoe covers.
- 3 Cover the mess with paper towels or absorbent powder so it can't spread in the air.
- 4 Scoop it up with towels and put everything in a trash bag.
- 5 Apply disinfectant made for norovirus. Health departments often cite a bleach solution of 1,000 to 5,000 ppm. Follow the label for strength and wet time; keep the area ventilated.
- 6 Throw away any food that could have been exposed.
- 7 Bag all gloves, gowns and towels and take them out immediately. Clean and disinfect tools or throw them away.
- 8 Wash hands and arms thoroughly. Change clothes if they were splashed.
- 9 Write an incident report: date, time, location, what was done. Keep it on file.

Done looks like: Cleanup kit stocked and in a known spot; at least one trained person per shift.

Posted / reviewed by _____ Date _____

Source: Larimer County Dept. of Health vomit and diarrheal cleanup guidance; FDA Food Code. Your local code may differ; it is the final word.

WHO	WHEN	YOU NEED
Everyone; manager owns cleaning	Every time ice is used; machine cleaned per manual	Ice scoop and holder, sanitized ice buckets, machine cleaner

Why it matters. Ice is food. Dirty bins and hands-in-the-ice are common inspection write-ups, and scale and slime ruin ice machines.

STEPS

- 1 Always use a scoop or tongs. Never hands, and never a glass.
- 2 Store the scoop in a clean holder outside the ice, handle up.
- 3 Use only clean, sanitized buckets that are only for ice. Never carry ice in a container that held anything else.
- 4 Keep bins and buckets covered when not in use.
- 5 Ice used to chill food or bottles is never served to guests.
- 6 Clean and sanitize the bin, scoop and holder on a regular schedule.
- 7 Descale and sanitize the machine per the manufacturer's manual. Change water filters on schedule.

Done looks like: Scoop in its holder, bin covered, cleaning dates on the monthly checklist.

Posted / reviewed by _____ Date _____

Source: DC Health 'Ice as Food' fact sheet. Your local code may differ; it is the final word.

WHO Hosts, servers, kitchen	WHEN Every table	YOU NEED POS, floor plan with table and seat numbers, ticket time tracker
---------------------------------------	----------------------------	---

Why it matters. Guests remember waiting more than the food. A set rhythm keeps a burger from taking 40 minutes and makes slow spots easy to find.

STEPS

- 1** Greet: host welcomes the guest at the door and seats them at a table that matches the server rotation.
- 2** Approach: server greets the table soon after seating, takes the drink order and points out specials and 86s.
- 3** Drinks: drinks arrive; server takes the food order and enters it right away by table and seat number.
- 4** Fire: the kitchen fires the ticket. Expo times it and calls for hands when it's in the window.
- 5** Deliver: food goes to the right seat without auctioning ("Who had the burger?"). Seat numbers make this automatic.
- 6** Check back: server checks back within two bites or two minutes and fixes problems on the spot.
- 7** Clear and offer: clear finished plates, offer dessert or coffee.
- 8** Pay: drop the check when the guest is ready; run payment promptly.
- 9** Goodbye: thank them by the door. Bus and reset the table to the floor plan.

STEP	YOUR TARGET TIME (FILL IN)
Seated to greeted	
Greeted to drinks on table	
Order in to food in window	
Food in window to on table	
Plates cleared to check offered	
Card taken to returned	

Done looks like: Your target times are written above and posted. Spot-check them with the ticket time tracker.

Posted / reviewed by _____ Date _____

Source: STLFSE; set targets to fit your menu and kitchen. Your local code may differ; it is the final word.

WHO	WHEN	YOU NEED
Line cooks and expo	Every service	Ticket printer or screen, ticket rail, expo station

Why it matters. Order on the line means food comes out in the order it was ordered, at the right temperature, together.

STEPS

- 1 Tickets print or show in order received. Hang them on the rail left to right; oldest is always on the left.
- 2 Expo reads each ticket out loud. Cooks answer "Heard."
- 3 Cooks fire items so everything for a table finishes together. Long-cooking items fire first.
- 4 Run the grill like a clock: new items always go down in the same spot and move one way across the grill, so the oldest is always the next off.
- 5 Food goes in the window under the heat lamp; expo checks the plate against the ticket, wipes the rim, and calls "Hands."
- 6 Call 86s the moment something runs out, so servers stop selling it.
- 7 Track ticket times during the rush with the ticket time tracker.

COMMON CALLS

- Heard: I understand.
- Fire: start cooking it now.
- All day: total count of an item on all open tickets.
- On the fly: needed right now.
- 86: out of it.
- Hands: someone run this food.
- Behind / Corner / Hot / Sharp: safety calls.

Done looks like: Nobody on the line asks "What's next?" The rail and the grill answer it.

Posted / reviewed by _____ Date _____

Source: STLFSE. Your local code may differ; it is the final word.

WHO Fry cook, closing cook	WHEN Every shift; full change as needed	YOU NEED Fryer manual, skimmer, filter system or filter machine, oil test strips, heat-resistant gloves and apron, face shield
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Why it matters. Fresh, filtered oil makes better food and costs less. Hot oil causes some of the worst kitchen burns.

STEPS

- 1 Skim crumbs often during service.
- 2 Salt and season food away from the fryer; salt breaks oil down.
- 3 Filter oil at least daily using the fryer's built-in filter or a filter machine, following the manual. Never carry hot oil in an open pot.
- 4 Wear gloves, apron and face shield when filtering or changing oil.
- 5 Change oil when it's dark, smokes at normal temp, foams, or makes food taste off. Test strips help you decide.
- 6 Top off with fresh oil to the fill line.
- 7 Keep the fryer at least the manufacturer's distance from open flames and water.
- 8 Store used oil in a covered container for your grease pickup company.

Done looks like: Oil filtered and logged; nobody carries hot oil across the kitchen.

Posted / reviewed by _____ Date _____

Source: STLFSE; follow your fryer manufacturer's manual. Your local code may differ; it is the final word.

WHO Closing crew; manager owns service schedule	WHEN Filters on schedule; service per fire code	YOU NEED Degreaser, filter soak tank or dish machine, K-class extinguisher
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Why it matters. Grease in hoods and ducts is fuel. Most kitchen fires start on the cooking line.

STEPS

- 1 Clean hood filters on a set schedule; heavy fry and grill kitchens often do it daily or weekly.
- 2 Never run the line without filters in place.
- 3 Have hoods and ducts cleaned professionally on the schedule below.
- 4 Have the hood fire suppression system inspected at least every 6 months by a certified company.
- 5 Keep a K-class extinguisher near fryers and know where the suppression pull station is.
- 6 Grease fire: turn off the heat if you can safely, cover it with a lid or use the K-class extinguisher, and pull the suppression system if needed. Never use water. Call 911.

TYPE OF COOKING	HOOD AND DUCT CLEANING
Solid fuel (wood or charcoal)	Monthly
High volume (24-hour, charbroiling, wok)	Quarterly
Moderate volume	Every 6 months
Low volume (seasonal, churches, camps)	Yearly

Done looks like: Service stickers on the hood are current; dates are on the maintenance calendar.

Posted / reviewed by _____ Date _____

Source: Kansas State Fire Marshal hood suppression fact sheet (NFPA 96). Your local code may differ; it is the final word.

WHO	WHEN	YOU NEED
Manager on duty	Power goes out or a cooler stops cooling	Thermometer, flashlight, ice, phone numbers for utility and refrigeration repair

Why it matters. Knowing what to save and what to toss protects guests and keeps you from throwing out more than you need to.

STEPS

- 1 Stop cooking and serving. Write down the time the power went out.
- 2 Keep cooler and freezer doors shut. Add bagged ice if you have it. Don't use dry ice in closed spaces.
- 3 Check cold food temps. Anything above 41°F goes in the trash.
- 4 Hot food below 135°F for more than 4 hours: throw it out. If power returns within 4 hours, reheat to 165°F.
- 5 Frozen food still solid with no signs of thawing can be kept.
- 6 Never run generators, grills or charcoal indoors.
- 7 Before reopening: coolers at 41°F or below, hot holding at 135°F or above, hot water running, hood fans working.
- 8 Call your health department; some require approval before you reopen. When in doubt, throw it out.

Done looks like: Utility, refrigeration repair and health department numbers are taped inside this binder.

Posted / reviewed by _____ Date _____

Source: Public Health – Seattle & King County power outage guidance. Your local code may differ; it is the final word.

WHO	WHEN	YOU NEED
Servers and managers	Any unhappy guest	Manager log, comp policy

Why it matters. Most unhappy guests never complain; they just don't come back. The ones who speak up are giving you a second chance.

STEPS

- 1 Listen to the whole complaint without interrupting.
- 2 Thank them for telling you and apologize for their experience.
- 3 Fix it now: remake the dish, offer something else, or bring the manager.
- 4 Use your comp policy: who can comp what, and how it's recorded.
- 5 If they say they got sick, take their name, phone, what they ate and when. Don't argue or admit fault. Tell the owner the same day.
- 6 Write it in the manager log. Look for patterns weekly.

Done looks like: Every complaint is in the manager log with what was done about it.

Posted / reviewed by _____ Date _____

Source: STLFSE. Your local code may differ; it is the final word.

WHO	WHEN	YOU NEED
Manager	End of every shift	POS reports, safe, deposit bag, drawer count sheet

Why it matters. Money that isn't counted the same way every day disappears without anyone noticing.

STEPS

- 1 Print the POS end-of-shift report.
- 2 Count the drawer with a second person when possible, away from the guest area.
- 3 Remove the starting bank and set it aside for tomorrow.
- 4 Compare cash to the POS cash sales. Write down any over or short.
- 5 Pay out cash tips only as your tip policy says; record each payout.
- 6 Bag the deposit, write the amount on the bag, and lock it in the safe.
- 7 Follow up on any short over a small set amount the next day.

Done looks like: Drawer count sheet signed, deposit in the safe, over/short written in the manager log.

Posted / reviewed by _____ Date _____

Source: STLFSE. Your local code may differ; it is the final word.



Who: Owner or manager

Copy this page for any job you want done the same way every time. Keep it to one page, one action per step, and test it by having a new person follow it while you watch.

TASK**WHO OWNS IT****WHEN IT HAPPENS / WHAT TRIGGERS IT****WHAT YOU NEED****WHY IT MATTERS****STEPS (ONE ACTION EACH)**

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____
- 4 _____
- 5 _____
- 6 _____
- 7 _____
- 8 _____
- 9 _____
- 10 _____

DONE LOOKS LIKE

Written by _____ Date _____



Food safety numbers in this binder come from the FDA Food Code as explained by these state and local agencies. Procedures marked STLFSE are common industry practice. Check with your own health department: many publish free forms you can use instead.

1. **Texas DSHS: Cooling Methods Fact Sheet**
<https://www.dshs.texas.gov/sites/default/files/foodestablishments/pdf/GuidanceDocs/1-3CoolingMethodsFactSheet.pdf>
2. **North Dakota Dept. of Health: Receiving Food Products**
<https://www.hhs.nd.gov/sites/www/files/documents/DOH%20Legacy/FL/F%26L%20Retail%20Guidance/Receiving%20Food%20Products.pdf>
3. **Fairfax County Health Dept.: Cooking and Reheating**
<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/health/sites/health/files/Assets/documents/PDF/cooking-reheating.pdf>
4. **Oregon Dept. of Agriculture: Food Employee Illness**
<https://www.oregon.gov/oda/Documents/Publications/FoodSafety/FoodCodeEmployeeIllnessFactSheet5.pdf>
5. **Wisconsin DATCP: Three-Compartment Sink**
<https://datcp.wi.gov/Documents2/3CompartmentSink.pdf>
6. **Minnesota Dept. of Health: Handwashing**
<https://www.health.mn.gov/communities/environment/food/docs/fs/handwashfs.pdf>
7. **Minnesota Dept. of Health: Major Food Allergens**
<https://www.health.mn.gov/communities/environment/food/docs/fs/majfoodallfs.pdf>
8. **Nevada DPBH: Thawing**
<https://dpbh.nv.gov/uploadedFiles/dpbh.nv.gov/content/Reg/Regulatory/Docs/FactSheetThawing.pdf>
9. **Larimer County: Vomit and Diarrheal Cleanup**
<https://www.larimer.gov/sites/default/files/uploads/2017/lcdhe-vomit-diarrheal-guidance.pdf>
10. **Texas DSHS: Time as a Public Health Control**
<https://www.dshs.texas.gov/sites/default/files/foodestablishments/pdf/GuidanceDocs/Time-as-a-Public-Health-Control.pdf>
11. **DC Health: Ice as Food**
[https://doh.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/doh/publication/attachments/FS\(redtop\)%20-%20Ice%20as%20Food%202016%20v1.pdf](https://doh.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/doh/publication/attachments/FS(redtop)%20-%20Ice%20as%20Food%202016%20v1.pdf)
12. **Public Health – Seattle & King County: Power Outages**
<https://cd.kingcounty.gov/en/dept/dph/health-safety/food-safety/-/media/e639ec5da9984853a1a3f6fdd8b636be.ashx>
13. **Kansas State Fire Marshal: Hood Suppression**
<https://www.firemarshal.ks.gov/DocumentCenter/View/340/Fire-Fact-066---Hood-Suppression-PDF>
14. **FDA: Food Code**
<https://www.fda.gov/food/retail-food-protection/fda-food-code>