NATIONAL RESTAURANT ASSOCIATION®

COVID-19

REOPENING GUIDANCE

A GUIDE FOR THE
RESTAURANT INDUSTRY

PUBLISHED April 22, 2020

For other resources:
RESTAURANT.ORG/COVID19

ServSafe
National Restaurant Association™

TO RESTAURANT OPERATORS GETTING READY TO REOPEN…

The purpose of guidance is just that, to offer you direction and provide a framework for best practices as you reopen.

But as the saying goes, the devil is in the details, and not every restaurant is the same and not every opening scenario will align. We recognize that not everyone has access to guidance, and that is where the National Restaurant Association can provide help.

- Make sure your person-in-charge has an up-to-date ServSafe Food Manager certification. The Food and Drug Administration requires every facility to have a person in charge on site during open hours and also directs that the person in charge should have a food manager certification.

- Provide ServSafe food handler training for your workers. They're your front line; educating them protects them, you and your guests.

- Make technology your friend. Contactless payment systems, automated ordering systems, mobile ordering apps, website updates and simple texts can help you to communicate and conduct business with reduced need for close contact. As you begin to reopen, keep communicating with customers (your hours, menu items, reservations, etc.), and help promote your social distancing and safety efforts.

- And some of the best advice comes from the Food and Drug Administration, which develops the Food Code we all rely on. Its newest guide, *Best Practices for Retail Food Stores, Restaurants, and Food Pick-Up/Delivery Services During the COVID-19 Pandemic*, was just released. You can link to it **here.**

As we continue to learn more about operating businesses during the COVID-19 pandemic, it's important to share with you the most current direction and advice from the experts at FDA, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Environmental Protection Agency, and other agencies. These documents will continue to reflect those best practices and will continue to be updated.

NATIONAL RESTAURANT ASSOCIATION®

REOPENING GUIDANCE TASK FORCE

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RETURNING RESTAURANTS TO SERVICE SAFELY

The National Restaurant Association partnered with representatives of the Food and Drug Administration, academia, the Conference for Food Protection, Ecolab, public health officials and industry representatives to develop a set of opening and operating guidelines to help restaurants return to full operation safely when the time comes.

This guidance is designed to provide you with a basic summary of recommended practices that can be used to help mitigate exposure to the COVID-19 virus, including:

- Food safety
- Cleaning and sanitizing
- Employee health monitoring and personal hygiene
- Social distancing

Combine this guidance with your existing policies as well as this new resource from the FDA, *Best Practices for Retail Food Stores, Restaurants, and Food Pick-Up/ Delivery Services During the COVID-19 Pandemic.*

Armed with information, ServSafe training and the recommendations of your local health departments, you can help secure a safe opening.

For the most comprehensive and up-to-date COVID-19 resources and information for the restaurant industry, visit **restaurant.org/COVID19.**

COVID-19

RESTAURANT RESPONSE

Food safety has always been a priority for the restaurant industry, for both guests and employees.

The basis of an effective food safety culture is the Food and Drug Administration Food Code, which for decades has served as the foundation for restaurant operating procedures as they relate to safe food handling. The guidance outlined in the Food Code is science-based and is designed to reduce and prevent the incidence of foodborne illness. Food Code requirements related to sanitation and personal hygiene in particular are the most reliable protocols available to combat risks related to the spread of COVID-19.

Local, state and federal regulators use the FDA Food Code as a model to develop or update their own food safety rules and to be consistent with national food regulatory policy.

AMONG THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE FOOD CODE THAT APPLY TO CORONAVIRUS MITIGATION ARE

- Prohibiting sick employees in the workplace
- Strict handwashing practices that include how and when to wash hands
- Strong procedures and practices to clean and sanitize surfaces
- Ensuring the person in charge of a foodservice facility is a certified food safety manager
- Ensuring the person in charge is on site at all times during operating hours

ServSafe
National Restaurant Association

FOR MORE THAN 30 YEARS, THE NATIONAL RESTAURANT ASSOCIATION'S SERVSAFE PROGRAM HAS PROVIDED FOOD SAFETY TRAINING FOR BOTH MANAGERS AND FOOD HANDLERS.

ServSafe certifies food safety managers through an independently developed certification exam, which follows standards adopted by the Conference for Food Protection.

The Conference for Food Protection also collaborates with the FDA to develop the Food Code.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS GUIDANCE IS TO BUILD ON THE ALREADY ESTABLISHED BEST PRACTICES AND REQUIREMENTS AVAILABLE that address specific health and safety concerns related to the spread of COVID-19, and to put those protocols into practice as state and local officials begin to open communities and businesses.

Operators should make use of these guidelines as they relate to their existing policies and procedures and in conjunction with instructions they receive from authorities during their reopening phase-in.

REOPENING GUIDANCE

FOR EMPLOYERS

State and local officials may tailor the application of opening criteria to local circumstances (e.g., metropolitan areas that have suffered severe COVID outbreaks vs. rural and suburban areas where outbreaks have not occurred or have been mild).

To prepare to comply with opening procedures, operators should update their existing policies and operating procedures in accordance with the latest FDA, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and Environmental Protection Agency guidance and in accordance with local and state officials regarding:

- Social distancing and protective equipment
- Employee health
- Cleaning/sanitizing/disinfecting

ON FOOD SAFETY

- Discard all food items that are out of date.
- Where salad bars and buffets are permitted by local/state officials, they must have sneeze guards in place. Change, wash and sanitize utensils frequently and place appropriate barriers in open areas. Alternatively, cafeteria style (worker served) is permissible with appropriate barriers in place.
- If providing a "grab and go" service, stock coolers to no more than minimum levels.
- Ensure the person in charge is ServSafe certified and that their certification is up to date, and provide food handler training to refresh employees.

REOPENING GUIDANCE

FOR CLEANING AND SANITIZING

- Thoroughly detail-clean and sanitize entire facility, especially if it has been closed. Focus on high-contact areas that would be touched by both employees and guests. Do not overlook seldom-touched surfaces. Follow sanitizing material guidance to ensure it's at effective sanitizing strength and to protect surfaces.

- Avoid all food contact surfaces when using disinfectants.

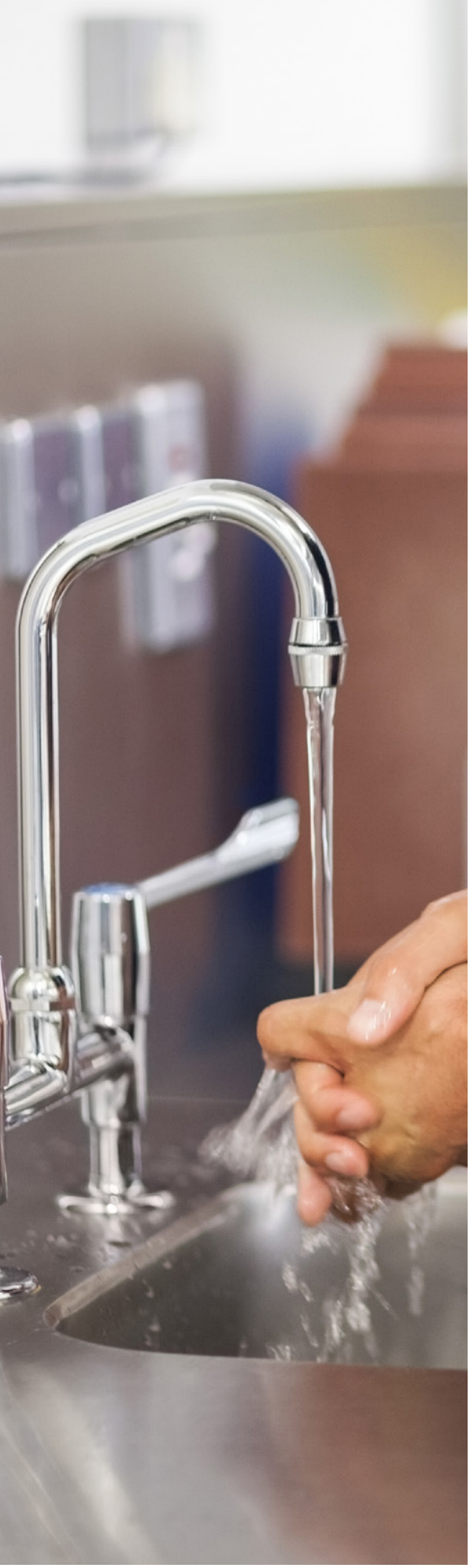
- Between seatings, clean and sanitize table condiments, digital ordering devices, check presenters, self-service areas, tabletops, and common touch areas. Single-use items should be discarded. Consider using rolled silverware and eliminating table presets.

- Remove lemons and unwrapped straws from self-service drink stations.

- Clean and sanitize reusable menus. If you use paper menus, discard them after each customer use. Implement procedures to increase how often you clean and sanitize surfaces in the back-of-house. Avoid all food contact surfaces when using disinfectants.

- Check restrooms regularly and clean and sanitize them based on frequency of use.

- Make hand sanitizer readily available to guests. Consider touchless hand sanitizing solutions.



REOPENING GUIDANCE

ON MONITORING EMPLOYEE HEALTH & PERSONAL HYGIENE

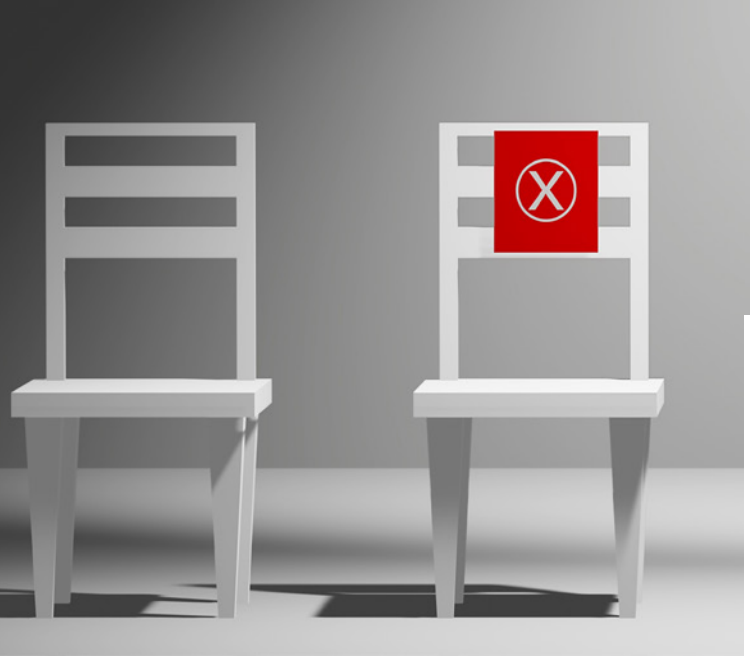
- Per existing FDA Food Code requirements, employees who are sick should remain at home.

- If an employee becomes ill or presents signs of illness, the operator should identify the signs during a pre-work screening and follow the business's established policies on when the ill employee is allowed to return to work. At a minimum, however, follow CDC guidelines – tell the employee to self-isolate for seven days from the onset of symptoms and be symptom-free for three days without medication.

- Taking employees' temperatures is at the operators' discretion. The CDC has not mandated taking an employee's temperature and any operator who chooses to do so should engage health officials first and adopt policies aligned with proper procedures. CDC guidance states the minimum temperature that indicates a fever is 100°F.

- Per CDC recommendations, face coverings have been shown to be effective tools to mitigate risk from individuals who show symptoms as well as those who don't, especially in close environments where it's hard for people to maintain a three- to six-foot distance. In some states and local jurisdictions, face coverings are required by government officials; some employers require them, too. In all cases, those coverings worn by employees should be kept clean in accordance with CDC guidance. CDC provides overall cleaning guidance **here.**

- Train all employees on the importance of frequent hand washing, the use of hand sanitizers with at least 60% alcohol content, and give them clear instruction to avoid touching hands to face.



REOPENING GUIDANCE

ON SOCIAL DISTANCING

- Update floor plans for common dining areas, redesigning seating arrangements to ensure at least six feet of separation between table setups. Limit party size at tables to no more than the established "maximums approved" as recommended by CDC or approved by local and state government. Where practical, especially in booth seating, physical barriers are acceptable. Consider a reservations-only business model or call-ahead seating to better space diners.

- Any social distancing measures based on square footage should take into account service areas as well as guest areas.

- Remind third-party delivery drivers and any suppliers that you have internal distancing requirements.

- Post signage at the entrance that states that no one with a fever or symptoms of COVID-19 is to be permitted in the restaurant.

- Limit contact between waitstaff and guests. Where face coverings are not mandated, consider requiring waitstaff to wear face coverings (as recommended by the CDC) if they have direct contact with guests.

- If practical, physical barriers such as partitions or Plexiglas barriers at registers are acceptable.

- Use technology solutions where possible to reduce person-to-person interaction: mobile ordering and menu tablets; text on arrival for seating; contactless payment options.

- Provide hand sanitizer for guests to use, including contactless hand sanitizing stations, and post signs reminding guests about social distancing. Thank them for their patience as you work to ensure their safety.

- Try not to allow guests to congregate in waiting areas or bar areas. Design a process to ensure guests stay separate while waiting to be seated. The process can include floor markings, outdoor distancing, waiting in cars, etc. Consider an exit from the facility separate from the entrance. Determine ingress/egress to and from restrooms to establish paths that mitigate proximity for guests and staff.

- Where possible, workstations should be staggered so employees avoid standing directly opposite one another or next to each other. Where six feet of separation is not possible, consider other options (e.g., face coverings) and increase the frequency of surface cleaning and sanitizing.

  Note: *Face coverings may be required by government officials and/or restaurant operators to mitigate the distancing gap. If not mandated, face coverings are recommended by CDC and, when worn, they should be cleaned daily according to CDC guidance.*

- Limit the number of employees allowed simultaneously in break rooms.

- With larger staffs, use communication boards to or digital messaging to convey pre-shift meeting information.

U.S. FOOD & DRUG ADMINISTRATION

BEST PRACTICES

FOR RETAIL FOOD STORES, RESTAURANTS & FOOD/PICK-UP DELIVERY SERVICES DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

FDA is sharing information about best practices to operate restaurants, retail food stores and associated pick-up and delivery services during the COVID-19 pandemic to safeguard workers and consumers.

This addresses key considerations for how foods offered can be safely handled and delivered to the public. This is not a comprehensive list. FDA encourages consulting the references and links provided below (by CDC, FDA, EPA, and OSHA) for more detailed information. This will be updated as FDA receives further information and inquiries.

- Managing Employee Health (Including Contracted Workers)
- Personal Hygiene for Employees
- Managing Operations in a Foodservice Establishment or Retail Food Store
- Managing Food Pick-Up and Delivery

BE HEALTHY, BE CLEAN

- Employees - Stay home or leave work if sick; consult doctor if sick, and contact supervisor
- Employers - Instruct sick employees to stay home and send home immediately if sick
- Employers - Pre-screen employees exposed to COVID-19 for temperature and other symptoms

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds
- If soap and water are not available, use a 60% alcohol-based hand sanitizer per CDC
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands
- Wear mask/face covering per CDC & FDA

- Never touch Ready-to-Eat foods with bare hands
- Use single service gloves, deli tissue, or suitable utensils
- Wrap food containers to prevent cross contamination
- Follow 4 steps to food safety Clean, Separate, Cook, and Chill

CLEAN & DISINFECT

- Train employees on cleaning and disinfecting procedures, and protective measures, per CDC and FDA
- Have and use cleaning products and supplies
- Follow protective measures

- Disinfect high-touch surfaces frequently
- Use EPA-registered disinfectant
- Ensure food containers and utensils are cleaned and sanitized

- Prepare and use sanitizers according to label instructions
- Offer sanitizers and wipes to customers to clean grocery cart/basket handles, or utilize store personnel to conduct cleaning/sanitizing

SOCIAL DISTANCE

- Help educate employees and customers on importance of social distancing:
  - Signs
  - Audio messages
  - Consider using every other check-out lane to aid in distancing

- Avoid displays that may result in customer gatherings; discontinue self-serve buffets and salad bars; discourage employee gatherings
- Place floor markings and signs to encourage social distancing

- Shorten customer time in store by encouraging them to:
  - Use shopping lists
  - Order ahead of time, if offered
- Set up designated pick-up areas inside or outside retail establishments

PICK-UP & DELIVERY

- If offering delivery options:
  - Ensure coolers and transport containers are cleaned and sanitized
  - Maintain time and temperature controls
  - Avoid cross contamination; for example, wrap food during transport

- Encourage customers to use "no touch" deliveries
- Notify customers as the delivery is arriving by text message or phone call

- Establish designated pick-up zones for customers
- Offer curb-side pick-up
- Practice social distancing by offering to place orders in vehicle trunks

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