



✓ CHECKLIST

Spring Cleaning



Out with the old, in with the new

Winter is over, and it's time to breathe new life into your restaurant. Spring cleaning is a great opportunity to ensure that your establishment not only sparkles but also offers your patrons a fresh and exciting experience. This checklist walks through the nitty-gritty of cleaning every nook and cranny of your restaurant.

Beyond the mop and broom, we'll explore innovative ways to breathe new life into your offerings and operations. **Spring is the perfect season to embrace change, experiment with new dishes, and perhaps even give your existing favorites a modern twist.** Redesigning your menu keeps your regulars excited and attracts new customers to savor everything your establishment has to offer.

Dining Area

Transform your dining area by wiping down walls, sanitizing tables and chairs, washing linens, and refreshing condiment stations, **ensuring a welcoming space for your guests.**

- Sanitize tables, chairs, and benches
- Wipe down walls
- Wash napkins and tablecloths
- Clean salt/pepper shakers and condiments (don't forget the bottom!)
- Sweep and mop floors
- Disinfect trash cans
- Wipe down light fixtures
- Clean windows
- Wipe down exit signs



Kitchen

Elevate your kitchen's hygiene with tasks ranging from wall and floor maintenance to meticulous cleaning of equipment, utensils, and food preparation surfaces, guaranteeing a pristine and efficient culinary workspace.

- Wipe down walls
- Sweep and mop floors
- Clean ovens, grills, fryers, and other cooking equipment
- Clean behind kitchen equipment
- Empty and clean refrigerators and freezers
- Check and clean exhaust hoods and filters
- Check and clean grease traps
- Clean and sanitize cutting boards, utensils, and kitchen tools
- Sanitize food prep areas
- Sanitize utensils, dishes, and glassware
- Sanitize and remove buildup from pots and pans
- Clean sinks and countertops
- Wash towels and aprons
- Sanitize ice machines
- Clean beverage dispenser
- Disinfect trash cans
- Refill soap containers
- Wipe down exit signs and light fixtures





Storage Areas

Streamline operations by organizing and cleaning storage spaces, discarding expired items, and maintaining an efficient inventory system.

1. Empty and Clean Shelves

- Sweep and mop floors
- Clean ovens, grills, fryers, and other cooking equipment

2. Inspect and Clean Storage Containers

- Check for expired or damaged items
- Clean and sanitize storage containers before returning them to shelves

3. Clean Refrigerators and Freezers

- Remove all items from refrigerators and freezers
- Defrost if necessary
- Clean shelves, drawers, and walls with a food-safe cleaner
- Sanitize surfaces

4. Check and Clean Food Labels

- Inspect labels for accuracy and legibility
- Remove old or damaged labels
- Re-label items if needed

5. Inspect Dry Goods

- Check and discard dry goods with signs of pests or spoilage
- Remove and discard expired items
- Clean storage bins or containers



6. Empty and Clean Shelves

- Arrange items based on the first-in, first-out (FIFO) system
- Ensure older items are used first to prevent wastage

7. Clean Small Appliances

- Clean and sanitize small appliances like blenders, mixers, or food processors
- Check for any maintenance needs

8. Deep Clean Equipment

- Clean and sanitize food processors, slicers, and other equipment
- Follow manufacturer guidelines for deep cleaning

9. Inspect and Clean Bulk Storage Bins

- Check bulk storage bins for cleanliness and integrity
- Clean and sanitize bins regularly

10. Dust and Clean High Shelves and Corners

- Remove dust from high shelves and corners
- Consider using a dusting tool with an extendable handle

11. Clean and Disinfect Storage Room Floors

- Sweep or vacuum floors to remove dust and debris
- Mop floors with a food-safe disinfectant

Restrooms

Prioritize customer comfort and cleanliness in restrooms by sanitizing surfaces, restocking essentials, and maintaining a meticulous cleaning routine, ensuring a positive experience for patrons.

- Sanitize sink and countertops
- Disinfect toilets, including bowls and seats
- Take out all trash and disinfect trash cans
- Restock toilet paper and paper towels
- Refill soap containers
- Wipe down light fixtures



Front of House

Make a lasting first impression by inspecting and cleaning entryways, decorative elements, host stands, and waiting areas, creating a polished and inviting front-of-house ambiance.

- Inspect and clean entryways, including doors and windows
- Clean and polish any decorative elements in the front of the restaurant
- Check and clean host/hostess stands and POS systems
- Clean and organize waiting areas

Floors

Elevate cleanliness across your restaurant by sweeping, mopping, and deep cleaning floors, addressing any damage to ensure a safe and appealing environment.

- Sweep and mop all floors, including dining areas, kitchen, and storage areas
- Deep clean carpets, if applicable
- Check for and repair any damaged flooring

HVAC Systems

Prioritize air quality by changing filters, cleaning vents and ducts, and scheduling professional HVAC maintenance to ensure a comfortable and healthy dining atmosphere.

- Change air filters in the HVAC system
- Clean vents and ducts
- Schedule professional maintenance if needed



Outdoor Areas

- Clean and organize outdoor seating areas
- Sweep and power wash outdoor spaces, including sidewalks, drive-thru, dumpster pads, and parking lot/asphalt
- Check and clean outdoor furniture
- Clean business signs
- Power wash the building
- Disinfect trash cans
- Wipe down light fixtures





Storage Areas

Extend your commitment to cleanliness outdoors by organizing seating areas, power washing surfaces, cleaning outdoor furniture, and ensuring the exterior reflects the same standards as the interior.

- Sweep and mop floors
- Clean ovens, grills, fryers, and other cooking equipment

Staff Areas

Safeguard your establishment from pests by conducting regular inspections, addressing issues promptly, and maintaining a clean environment that deters unwanted visitors.

- Clean and organize break rooms and staff areas
- Check and clean employee lockers
- Ensure proper disposal of waste in staff areas

General Maintenance

- Inspect and replace any worn or damaged equipment
- Test and replace light bulbs as needed
- Check fire extinguishers and other safety equipment

Remember to involve your staff in spring cleaning and assign specific tasks to different team members. **Regular maintenance and cleaning contribute to a healthier and more efficient restaurant environment.**



Clean Up Your Menu

Compact: The current trend in restaurant menus reflects a departure from traditional formats, with many establishments opting for compact, half-page menus. Bold and bright colors, particularly neon and patterns, are also gaining popularity as restaurants seek to distinguish themselves.

Small, Big, Bigger: Restaurants are reimagining traditional menu structures, moving away from course-by-course layouts to embrace more expansive sections and formats. In response to the current emphasis on workers' rights, some establishments are using menu space to highlight their commitment to staff, often through service charges contributing to higher wages or employee benefits.

Non-alcoholic Options: A noticeable shift towards alcohol-free options is underway as more Americans cut back on alcohol consumption. Restaurants now dedicate sections to buzz-free choices featuring teas, juices, and virgin cocktails, sometimes labeled as "zero proof."

If you're not getting the highest profit margin from your menu items, it may be time to practice **menu engineering**. Look at your sales reports to see if you have items that are not selling or, perhaps, are selling but not bringing in a respectable profit. **These items need to be removed from the menu or have the recipe reworked.** Should you not be able to part with an item and choose the latter, be sure to let customers know it is "improved" or change the name of the dish so those who didn't care for it before may give it another chance.



Trying out new menu and drink items as specials is a safe way to see if your customers will embrace them. The desire for **regional menus** has been on the rise for the past few years and could draw in fresh customers.

Menu Items

The Caesar Salad: Traditionally a steakhouse staple, this iconic salad has transcended its origins and can now be found in diverse cuisines such as Mexican, Thai, and Cuban. These Caesars incorporate unique twists, with dressings featuring ingredients like miso or fish sauce and unconventional substitutions such as fennel pollen or snow peas replacing traditional romaine lettuce.

The popularity of Caesar salads is evident in their ubiquity across various restaurant menus. Chefs are creatively reinterpreting this classic dish to suit their culinary styles and the theme of their establishments. Despite the variations, the Caesar salad's elevated presentation and unique ingredients often come with a price, with the average cost on these menus being \$15.42. According to Fermin Nuñez, owner of Este, a coastal Mexican restaurant in Austin, Texas, the Caesar salad holds a special place among chefs as a favorite, showcasing its enduring appeal and adaptability in contemporary gastronomy.

Fried Chicken: Fried chicken continues to surge in popularity across a diverse range of styles and cuisines, ranging from chai-brined crispy chicken at an all-day cafe to chicken milanese tortas at a Mexican eatery and chicken katsu at an izakaya. As menu prices increase, this irresistibly crunchy dish remains one of the more affordable entrees, providing a comforting and familiar option for diners of various backgrounds.

Panna Cotta: With the escalating expenses in both food and labor, restaurants are embracing a straightforward and budget-friendly dessert option: panna cotta. This versatile custard can be prepared in advance and doesn't necessarily require the specialized skills of a pastry chef. The adoption of panna cotta is becoming more prevalent as many restaurants streamline or eliminate their pastry departments in response to labor challenges.

Manager Tasks

Empty and Clean Shelves

Great service is what keeps customers coming back. Are your employees getting burned out due to long shifts and employee shortages? It could be time to work on your **restaurant's culture**.

Organizational culture plays a vital part in acquiring, engaging, and retaining employees. Creating a stable culture in which every employee understands how their daily actions affect the success of the entire restaurant will help build and maintain a loyal team of strategic thinkers.

Try New Marketing Tactics

Search Engine Optimization, or SEO, is a great way to increase your revenue by growing your customer base with patrons who may have yet to find your restaurant. 92% of consumers will choose a business on the first page of local search results, and 60% of users click on one of the top three search results, which means it's extremely important to be at the top of results when consumers search. How? By increasing your SEO. And great news – it's free! Read these **8 Tips for Mastering Cost-Free SEO for Restaurateurs** for pointers.

Rearrange Your Walk-Ins

Properly maintained storage is the backbone of your food inventory management system because it prevents the loss of merchandise, particularly through spoilage. Get your walk-ins in order to avoid throwing product – and money – literally in the garbage. Use the first in, first out system (FIFO). FIFO means newer stuff at the back and older stuff in the front to ensure that the older stuff doesn't expire before you can use it. **Always date and label everything. EVERYTHING.**

Conclusion ✨

This year is slated to be a great year for restaurants, with lots of opportunities for growth and profitability. With the restaurant labor market rebounding and inflation slowing, operators can ensure a better-than-ever new year with just a little review of their data.

Armed with the insights and strategies provided in this guide, **your restaurant can embrace change, support a dynamic team culture, and thrive in the evolving culinary landscape.** Here's to a prosperous and fulfilling year!

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