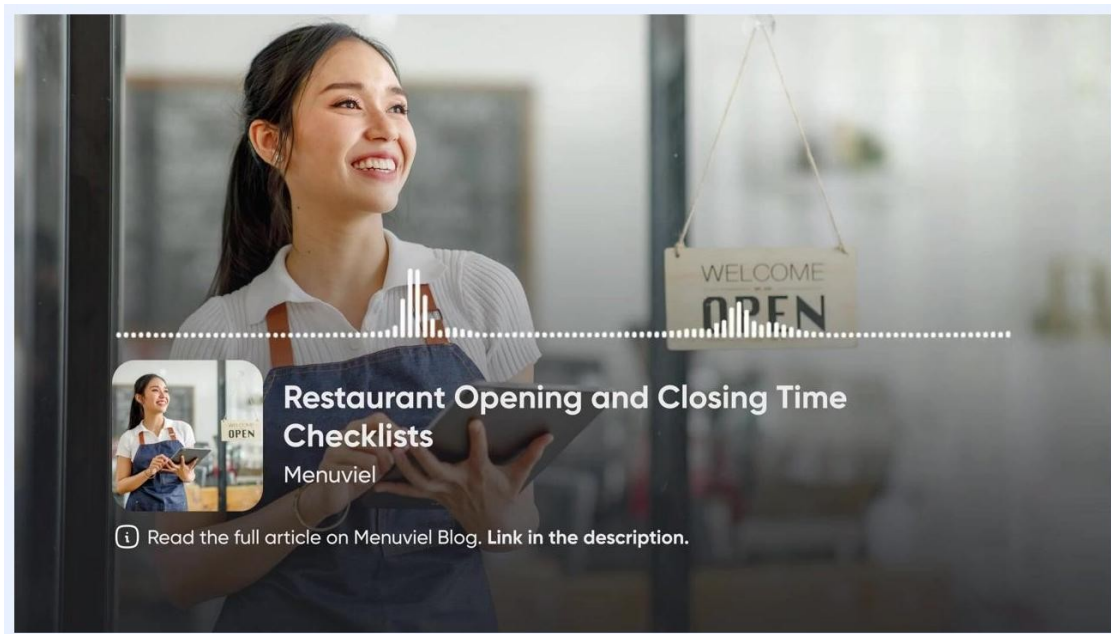


# How to Do a Restaurant Closing Checklist (and Opening Checklist)

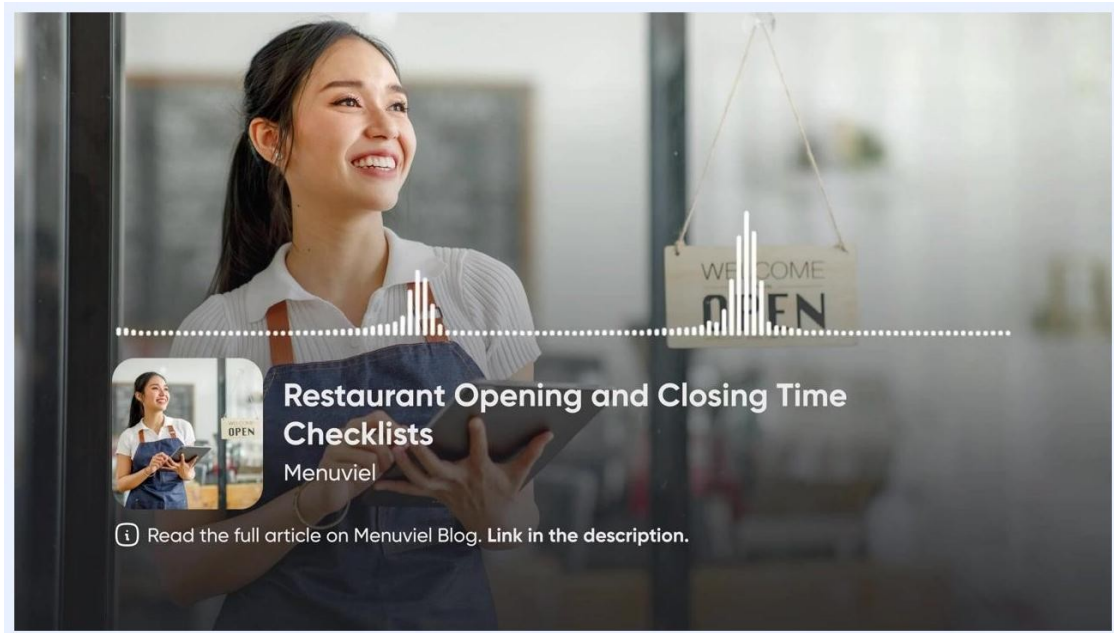
---

Knowing how to do a restaurant closing checklist—alongside a strong opening checklist—is one of the most important habits a restaurant team can build. Checklists are essential tools used for both opening and closing procedures, ensuring that critical tasks are completed so that food safety, operational efficiency, staff training, and customer satisfaction are all protected. These checklists are as vital to restaurants as pre-flight checks are to pilots: they make sure nothing is missed and that operations run smoothly from the first customer to the last.



A restaurant worker stands by the entrance holding a tablet, reinforcing the importance of securing the restaurant before leaving for the night.

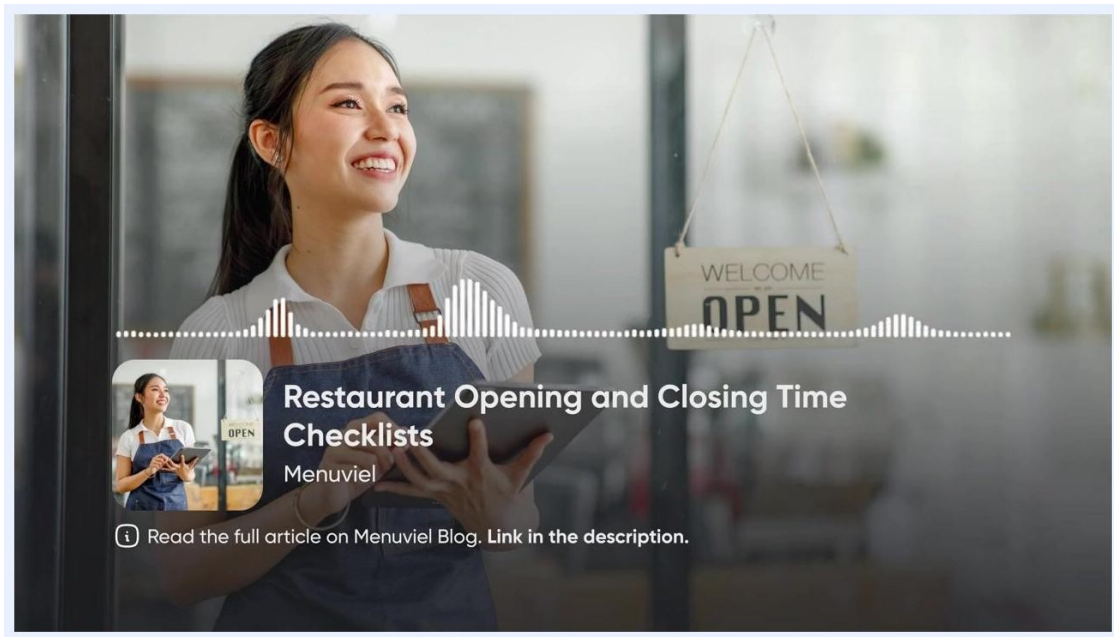
Restaurant checklists are broken down by specific area—kitchen, dining room, and front of house—with each area having its own detailed set of tasks for thorough preparation and closure. Used consistently, they maintain high standards and consistency in service and food quality, prevent important tasks from being overlooked, serve as effective training tools for new staff, and support a safe, welcoming environment for both staff and customers.



A smiling restaurant worker in uniform stands at the entrance holding a tablet, with a "Welcome Open" sign visible behind them.

## Shift details

Before any checklist begins, the team should record the basic shift information so tasks can be tracked and reviewed later: the restaurant location, the department (kitchen, dining room, or front of house), the shift (opening or closing), the date, and the name of the person responsible for completing the checklist. This information creates a clear record of accountability for every shift.



A restaurant worker stands by a glass door with a "Welcome Open" sign, holding a tablet, in a clean and welcoming environment that reflects professionalism, teamwork, and readiness.

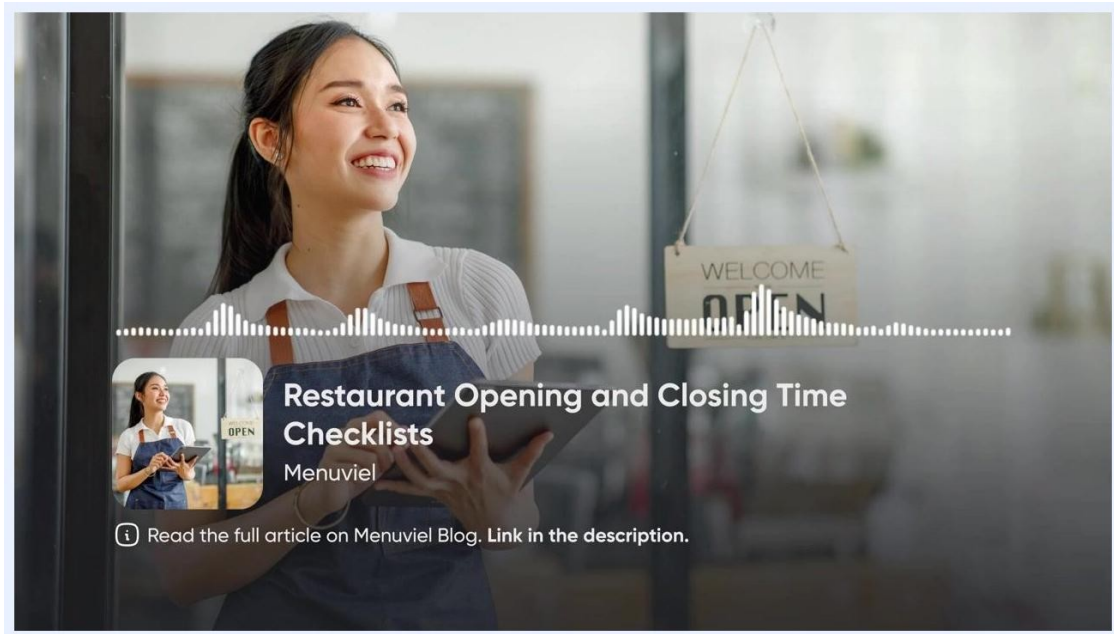
## Opening tasks

Opening tasks cover everything that must happen before the restaurant is ready to welcome customers. The first priority is to make sure everything in the restaurant is clean and safe.

### Sanitation and workstation inspection

- Inspect all food prep areas for cleanliness and sanitation, paying extra attention to surfaces and tools that come into direct contact with food.
- Ensure all handwashing stations are fully stocked with soap, paper towels, and sanitizer.
- Address any potential hazards immediately, such as spills, broken equipment, or blocked exits. These steps are not just regulatory—they protect customers, staff, and the restaurant's reputation.

- Check that bathrooms are sparkling clean and fully stocked with necessary supplies.
- Ensure all tables, chairs, and dining surfaces are wiped down and sanitized, and confirm the dining area is tidy and presentable for guests.



A restaurant worker holds a tablet near the entrance while checking opening tasks, with a "Welcome Open" sign visible.

### Equipment startup

- Check that ovens, fridges, and dishwashers are functioning correctly.
- Power on and test POS (Point of Sale) systems at the cashier stations, confirming they can process orders, print receipts, manage inventory, and track sales.
- Address any equipment malfunctions before opening to avoid disruptions during service.

### Inventory and prep

- Review inventory to confirm all necessary ingredients and supplies are present.
- Inspect deliveries for freshness and quality, rejecting any items that do not meet standards.
- Organize inventory for easy access during food preparation.
- Apply the FIFO (First In, First Out) principle to all inventory management: use ingredients in the order they were received, place older stock in front and newer deliveries behind, and regularly check for items nearing

expiration so they are prioritized for use. This minimizes waste and guarantees freshness for customers—for example, don't use wilted lettuce if a fresh delivery is available.

- Prep ingredients according to the day's menu, including chopping vegetables and marinating proteins.
- Organize prepped ingredients in designated storage areas and maintain a clean, organized prep area throughout the process.

### Dining room preparation

- Arrange tables and chairs neatly according to the restaurant's layout plan.
- Place menus on each table or at the entrance as appropriate.
- Dust all lighting fixtures and ensure bulbs are working.
- Set the music to the desired volume and playlist to create the intended atmosphere, and check that the overall ambiance matches the restaurant's personality and desired vibe.
- Ensure restrooms are clean and fully stocked with toilet paper, soap, and paper towels; restock any missing supplies before opening.



A restaurant worker stands ready at the entrance with a tablet as the "Open" sign is displayed for the day.

### Staffing checks

- Confirm that all staff are aware of their opening duties and have completed their assigned tasks.

- Conduct a staff meeting before service: review the day's schedule, assign specific roles and responsibilities for the shift, discuss any specials, promotions, or menu changes, and address any anticipated challenges or important notes for the service.
- Confirm that all staff understand their duties and are prepared for opening.

## Service readiness

Before guests arrive, perform a final walkthrough to confirm the restaurant is truly ready:

- Double-check that all food safety, cleanliness, and equipment checks have been completed.
- Ensure the dining area, kitchen, and restrooms are guest-ready.
- Confirm that all staff are present, in uniform, and ready to greet customers.
- Unlock the doors and display the "Open" sign, then welcome the first guests with a smile and attentive service.

## Closing tasks

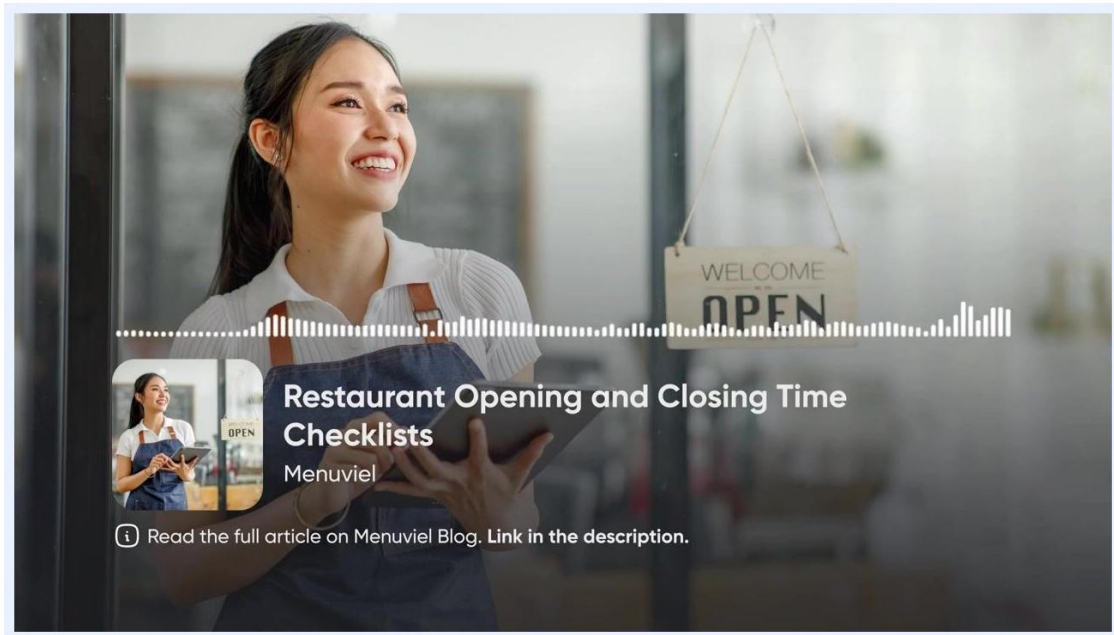
Closing is more than flipping the "OPEN" sign to "CLOSED" and locking the doors—it involves a comprehensive set of tasks. Do not begin closing procedures until the last customer has exited the restaurant and all guests have left. This section explains how to do a restaurant closing checklist step by step, moving from the front of house into the kitchen for end-of-day cleaning and shutdown.

### Cleaning

- Conduct a thorough deep clean of all kitchen surfaces, equipment, and utensils, focusing on areas that accumulate grease, food debris, or spills throughout the day.
- Ensure all food preparation and storage areas are sanitized, and give all kitchen equipment a good scrub down to remove any residue—countertops, stovetops, ovens, grills, and sinks.
- Adhere to food safety protocols during cleaning, using appropriate cleaning agents and sanitizers.
- Wipe down all tables, chairs, and floors in the dining area; remove crumbs, spills, and debris from the day, and reset the dining area for the next service.



- Pay special attention to high-touch surfaces such as doorknobs, light switches, handles, and POS terminals, since these are handled by many people and must be kept sanitized.
- Perform a deep clean of all restroom facilities: scrub toilets, sinks, mirrors, and floors, and inspect for cleanliness before leaving.



A restaurant worker stands by the entrance holding a tablet, with a "Welcome Open" sign on the door, marking the transition into closing procedures.

### Food storage

- Ensure all food is stored properly and expired items are discarded.
- Inspect all refrigerators, freezers, and storage units, and ensure food is stored at the correct temperature.
- Confirm that doors are closed properly and seals are intact—treat this step with the same care as tucking in the whole kitchen for a good night's sleep.

### Waste removal

- Remove any lingering food debris from the day's operations as part of the deep clean, so no flavors or bacteria linger overnight.

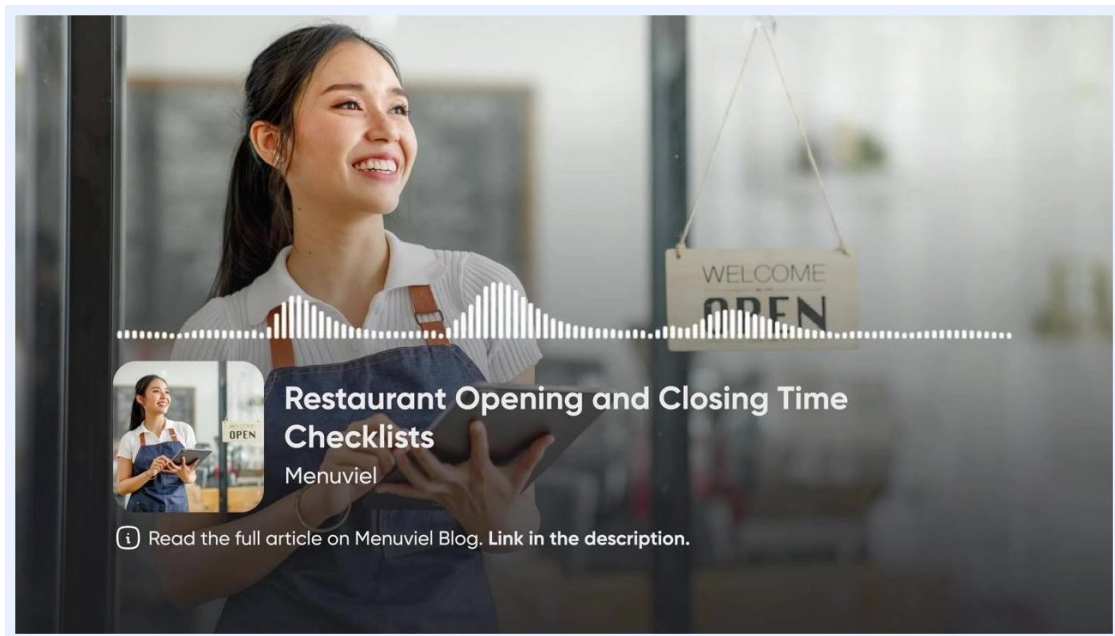
### Equipment shutdown

- Turn off all kitchen appliances and equipment that are not required to remain on overnight.

- Double-check that ovens, stoves, fryers, and other machinery are safely powered down—do not simply flip switches; follow proper shutdown procedures for each piece of equipment to save energy and prevent overnight hazards.
- Unplug or power down non-essential equipment such as countertop appliances and blenders, and switch off lights in unused areas.

### Restocking

- Review inventory levels for all essential ingredients and supplies.
- Restock stations with necessary items for the next day and organize storage areas for easy access and efficient workflow for the opening team.
- Restock restrooms with toilet paper, soap, and paper towels.
- Treat closing like a relay race: the closing team checks all essential ingredients, restocks the stations, and organizes everything so the opening team can start smoothly.



A restaurant worker stands by the entrance holding a tablet during the closing shift, with the "Welcome Open" sign visible.

### Cash and security

- Check that all doors and windows are properly closed and locked, and confirm that no entry points are left unsecured—this is a top priority on the closing checklist, comparable to locking down a fortress for the night.



- Set any security alarms or systems as required.
- Make a final round to ensure all lights are turned off, alarms are set, and no risks remain.
- Drawer closeout and safe drop procedures should be documented here as well, including counting the cash drawer, recording totals, and depositing cash into the safe according to the restaurant's cash-handling policy; this detail was not covered in the material reviewed and should be added by the location's management.

## Manager sign-off

Review the entire closing checklist to confirm that all cleaning, organizing, securing, and accounting tasks are completed, and double-check that nothing has been overlooked. The goal is to leave the restaurant safe, secure, and in good shape so the next team can walk in and hit the ground running. A formal sign-off section should record any exceptions found during the shift, the corrective actions taken, and the manager's approval signature and date; this specific documentation format was not detailed in the material reviewed and should be defined by the restaurant's management.

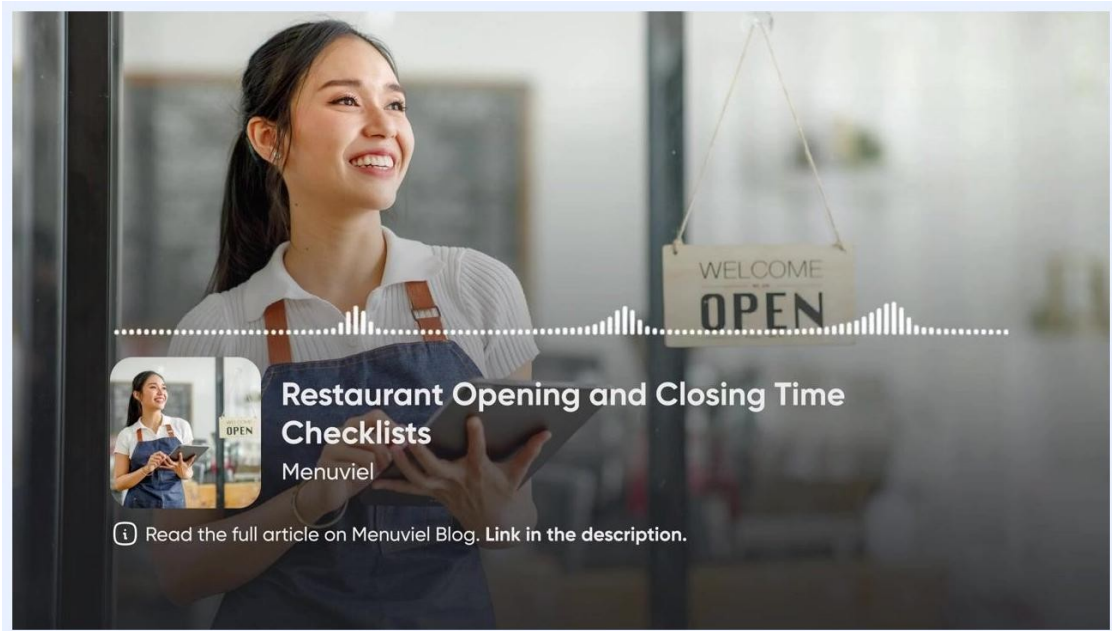
## What's next

Even the best checklist is only as good as the person using it. Providing a checklist does not guarantee proper execution, so ongoing training and process improvement are the natural next steps after implementing opening and closing checklists.

### Train staff to use checklists effectively

- Provide training sessions that address frequent errors in checklist usage and demonstrate how to use checklists correctly in daily operations.
- Stress the importance of attention to detail for every checklist item, no matter how small, and require staff to check off and document completion of every task.
- Use documentation to track which tasks have been completed and by whom, and store completed checklists for future reference and quality control.
- Move beyond simply reading procedures: require staff to demonstrate checklist tasks, then let them practice—ideally during slower periods or with a supervisor guiding them—so training becomes a form of hands-on "restaurant boot camp."

- Make checklist use part of the restaurant's daily culture, not an optional extra.



A restaurant worker stands by the entrance holding a tablet, illustrating the final stages of the closing shift.



A restaurant worker stands by a glass door with a "Welcome Open" sign, holding a tablet used for digital checklist tracking.

Consider digital checklists

- Many restaurants are moving toward digital checklists using tablets or similar devices, which streamline the process and reduce paper usage.
- Digital checklists offer real-time updates, easier tracking, and improved accountability, acting almost like a virtual manager that oversees task completion and provides reminders.

#### Avoid common mistakes

- A chain is only as strong as its weakest link—make sure every team member is trained and accountable for their checklist responsibilities.
- Do not rush through cleaning tasks, especially at closing; allocate adequate time for thorough cleaning to maintain hygiene standards, since rushing may save a few minutes but can hurt those standards significantly.
- Ensure restocking is done properly at the end of each shift, double-checking that all supplies are replenished for the next team.
- Recognize that small oversights can have a big impact on both the customer experience and the restaurant's reputation.



A restaurant worker stands by a glass door with a "Welcome Open" sign, holding a tablet, in a clean and welcoming environment that reflects professionalism and readiness.

#### Build a culture of teamwork and accountability

- Everyone should understand their role and take ownership of their assigned tasks, with open communication and mutual support ensuring all checklist items are completed thoroughly.

- Behind-the-scenes checklists affect everything in the restaurant, even the tasks not visible to customers, and restaurant teams deserve recognition for the dedication and hard work this requires.
- Encourage ongoing learning and appreciation for the meticulous work behind every smooth dining experience, since behind every delicious meal is a well-executed checklist.
- Promote continuous exploration and improvement of best practices as an ongoing part of restaurant operations.