

CHC Restaurant Startup Checklist

Executive Summary

This comprehensive restaurant startup plan outlines the 12–18-month journey from concept to grand opening. The plan is structured in five strategic phases. Each phase contains detailed action items designed to ensure methodical progress while minimizing risks inherent in restaurant startups.

The plan addresses all critical aspects of restaurant development including market analysis, concept creation, financial planning, location selection, operational systems, staffing, and marketing strategies.

With proper execution, this roadmap provides a solid foundation for establishing a successful, sustainable restaurant operation that stands out in a competitive marketplace.

Core Purpose Statement

To create memorable dining experiences that celebrate culinary craftsmanship while fostering community connections and lasting relationships through exceptional food and genuine hospitality.

Phase 1: Planning and Research (3-4 months)

Market Research

- ☐ Analyze local restaurant landscape and identify market gaps
- ☐ Study local food trends and preferences
- ☐ Research potential locations and areas
- ☐ Analyze local demographics and competition

Concept Development

- ☐ Define restaurant concept and cuisine type
- ☐ Create preliminary menu and pricing strategy
- ☐ Develop unique value proposition
- ☐ Draft business plan including:
 - Financial projections
 - Startup costs
 - Operating expenses
 - Marketing strategy
 - Staffing plans

Phase 2: Legal and Financial Setup (2-3 months)

Legal Requirements

- ☐ Register business with state/local authorities
- ☐ Obtain Employer Identification Number (EIN)
- ☐ Apply for necessary licenses and permits:
 - Food service license
 - Business license
 - Liquor license (if applicable)
 - Food handler certification

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Financial Planning

- ☐ Secure funding (loans, investors, personal capital)
- ☐ Open business bank accounts
- ☐ Set up accounting systems
- ☐ Acquire insurance:
 - General liability
 - Workers' compensation
 - Property insurance
 - Food contamination insurance

Phase 3: Location and Setup (4-6 months)

Location Selection

- ☐ Find and lease/purchase restaurant space
- ☐ Negotiate lease terms
- ☐ Schedule building inspections
- ☐ Plan renovations if needed

Equipment and Supplies

- ☐ Design kitchen layout
- ☐ Purchase commercial kitchen equipment
- ☐ Source supplies and ingredients
- ☐ Set up relationships with vendors
- ☐ Install Point of Sale (POS) system

Phase 4: Staff and Operations (2-3 months)

Hiring and Training

- ☐ Develop employee handbooks and procedures
- ☐ Hire key staff:
 - Chef
 - Kitchen staff
 - Servers
 - Managers
- ☐ Create training programs
- ☐ Schedule staff training sessions

Operations Setup

- ☐ Establish operating procedures
- ☐ Finalize menu
- ☐ Set up inventory management system
- ☐ Create cleaning and maintenance schedules
- ☐ Develop food safety protocols

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Phase 5: Marketing and Launch (2-3 months)

Pre-opening Marketing

- ☐ Create website and social media accounts
- ☐ Develop brand identity (logo, signage, menus)
- ☐ Plan grand opening event
- ☐ Engage with local food bloggers and media
- ☐ Join local restaurant association

Soft Opening

- ☐ Conduct friends and family nights
- ☐ Test kitchen operations
- ☐ Gather feedback and adjust
- ☐ Train staff in real conditions

Grand Opening

- ☐ Host grand opening event
- ☐ Implement marketing campaign
- ☐ Engage with the local community
- ☐ Monitor and adjust operations as needed

Total Timeline: 12-18 months

CHC Concept Development & Business Plan Elements

Additional Considerations

- ☐ Budget for unexpected expenses (15-20% contingency recommended)
- ☐ Establish relationships with local suppliers
- ☐ Consider seasonal menu planning
- ☐ Develop crisis management procedures
- ☐ Create sustainability and waste management plans

Restaurant Identity Development

- ☐ Define culinary direction and overall vision
- ☐ Develop restaurant's story and unique angle
- ☐ Identify target market within the local population
- ☐ Choose focus (e.g., local cuisine, farm-to-table, upscale, casual family, fusion, fast-casual)

Menu Engineering

- ☐ Create preliminary menu reflecting your concept
- ☐ Determine portion sizes and plating presentation
- ☐ Calculate food costs for each dish (aim for 28-32% food cost)
- ☐ Plan for seasonal menu changes based on local availability
- ☐ Consider dietary restrictions and alternatives
- ☐ Develop pricing strategy

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Service Style

- ☐ Define service model (fine dining, casual, counter service)
- ☐ Plan table turnover rates
- ☐ Develop service standards and procedures
- ☐ Design guest experience journey from entry to exit

Business Plan Components

- ☐ Complete executive summary
- ☐ Conduct thorough market analysis
- ☐ Create detailed financial projections
- ☐ Develop comprehensive marketing strategy
- ☐ Outline operations plan
- ☐ Perform risk analysis
- ☐ Plan growth strategy

The CHC Restaurant Startup Checklist:

- **Establishes the timeframe** - Sets clear expectations for the 12–18-month journey from concept to opening
- **Highlights the structured approach** - Outlines the five strategic phases that organize the work
- **Emphasizes comprehensiveness** - Notes that the plan addresses all critical restaurant development aspects
- **Positions for success** - Frames the checklist as a roadmap for establishing a successful, sustainable operation

Together with the core purpose statement below, it provides the strategic foundation that will guide all the tactical elements in the checklist.

The Core Purpose Statement: "To create memorable dining experiences that celebrate culinary craftsmanship while fostering community connections and lasting relationships through exceptional food and genuine hospitality."

This core purpose statement:

- Focuses on creating memorable experiences (not just serving food)
- Emphasizes culinary craftsmanship (highlighting quality and skill)
- Highlights community building (connecting with your local area)
- Mentions relationship development (encouraging repeat customers)
- Combines exceptional food with genuine hospitality (the two pillars of restaurant success)

This statement provides a clear "why" behind your restaurant that can:

- Guide decision-making at all levels
- Inspire staff and create a unified culture
- Connect emotionally with customers
- Differentiate you from competitors who focus solely on profit