

Things are changing rapidly, and we will do our best to keep this as up to date as possible. This information is current as of April 23rd, 2020.

USA GUIDE

Re-emergence guide for restaurants

This guide lays out the next steps to re-opening restaurants. It helps operators prepare for the days before re-opening, from preparing physical space, to onboarding staff, as well as how to get the word out, and how to generate new streams of revenue while business returns to levels before the Coronavirus pandemic

What is covered in this guide

This guide is meant to collect general resources and steps necessary to successfully reopen your business. While not comprehensive, it should cover the main areas to focus on when restarting:

- 1 Prepare your finances
- 2 Restart your operations
- 3 Update your health and sanitation policies
- 4 Understand changes in diner behavior
- 5 Revisit your menu
- 6 Welcome back your staff
- 7 Let customers know you're back

As you plan to reopen, keep in mind that...

Business will be slow for a while as restrictions get slowly lifted and traffic ramps back up. As a result of health and economic concerns, expect a new “normal” to be reality.

A slow ramp up will need to be accounted for in re-opening plans—you will need to think differently about technology, cost controls, menus, service, operations, and more. You'll have to prepare customers, staff, and your business to grow sales over months, much like a new concept. It will be a while before restaurants and bars are full again, and diners will likely be more cautious of total spend for the foreseeable future.

Prepare your finances

It's always important to consult your profit and loss statement to gauge your restaurant's performance over time, but as prep to reopen following the pandemic, your P&L will help you make calls about where your business needs to lean in and pull back.

Evaluate new revenue streams

If you stayed open for off-premise service, or turned your restaurant into a market or meal-kit shop, now is the time to take stock of how those efforts affected your bottom line. Ask yourself:

1. How much revenue did they drive?
2. Was there a particular program that worked better than expected?
3. Consider how you might incorporate these ad-hoc services to normal business operations—you've already built the revenue stream, after all.

Identify excess costs

One potential silver lining of the pandemic is that it may have revealed elements of your business that aren't as essential as you thought. Ask yourself:

1. How did your fixed and variable costs change during the pandemic?
2. Are there FOH/BOH positions, equipment rentals, or subscriptions you can do without?
3. Can you work with your purveyors to find the right products for the applications you need to restart?

Set check-ins

The landscape is shifting rapidly, and you're going to be more busy than ever. Schedule regular P&L reviews at shorter-than-normal intervals so you can adapt as necessary if conditions change.

Assess your cash needs

As you plan to reopen, estimate your operating expenses to determine how much cash you'll need to run your business for the startup period.

1. Estimate all your operating expenses, including payroll, food costs, rent, utilities, subscriptions, and insurance.
2. Calculate your estimated income. Include off-premise, bar, dine-in, and any other income sources.
3. Make sure that between the cash you already have at hand (if any), and your estimated income you will have enough cash to cover all your expenses. If necessary, consider applying for a loan, grant, or credit.

Consider new revenue sources:

Dine-in
Takeout
Delivery
Pop-ups
Meal kits
Pantry/grocery items
Bar/Alcohol
Cocktail kits
Gift cards
Merchandise
Events
Classes

Restart your operations

Prepare your kitchen

Operators will need to prioritize sanitation and cleaning above all else. Clean equipment, surfaces, walk-ins, appliances, doors and handles, and any other surface staff and guests come into contact with. Schedule hood cleaning if hired out. Beyond cleaning, ensure your kitchen is stocked with cleaning supplies and equipment to keep your staff safe.

Once the kitchen and dining room are properly cleaned and sanitized, take stock of what inventory is still available, and begin to prepare your order with your food distributor. See below for guidelines on preparing an opening menu.

Lastly, ensure all equipment is working properly and perform or schedule maintenance as needed.

Reset your dining room and entrance

Sanitization of the kitchen is only the first step, as one can imagine. The dining room will be just as important, and optics will matter. Clean and sanitize menus, stations throughout the restaurant, and ensure glassware, silverware, dishwash is spotless to provide guests with a sense of cleanliness and safety. Clean bathrooms from top to bottom. Scrub floors, wash windows and doors, and clear any debris from the outside of your establishment.

Think about how guests can literally see your sanitation practices and procedures by setting up signs that communicate processes to staff and customers, with stations throughout the operation. You may also want to consider increasing bathroom cleanliness procedures during re-opening.

But cleanliness is only the first step. The set-up of your dining room will be just as important to reimagine and adjust. Consumers will be timid about dining out, and space will make them feel more comfortable. It's more than likely that traffic will continue to be down for several months, so take this time to space out tables and barstools to CDC recommendations, as well as putting fewer people at larger tables, if possible. If you don't have space to move chairs and tables out of your dining space, consider putting "reserved" signs on every other table, so diners know where not to sit.

Resources + Links:

[Operator reopening checklist](#)

[Disinfecting in the Time of Covid-19](#)

[Proper Cleaning and Sanitizing Processes](#)

Operations Checklist

Make sure utilities are paid and running:

- Electric
- Internet
- Water
- Garbage/Grease trap pickup
- Gas
- Water
- TV

Get your technology back online:

- Make sure your Wifi is running
- Restart any suspended or cancelled subscriptions
- Update your POS to reflect menu and hour changes
- Update your staffing software to reflect staff and hour changes
- Update payroll and accounting
- Update your website to reflect changes in hours, offerings, and menu

Update your health and sanitation policies

Rebuild trust with your customers by establishing comprehensive employee health policies, instituting stringent sanitation practices, and implementing new social distancing tactics.



Make sure you're compliant with the latest public health regulations

A Healthy Space

- Deep clean entire back and front of house with Covid-19 Sanitation Kit (clean nightly while open)
- Disinfect high-contact areas like knobs, handles, and switches (every 2 hours while open)
- Revisit dining room layout to convert community spaces and increase distance between tables
- Establish designated areas for delivery pick up and takeout

B Safe Food

- Ensure the quality of food stored pre-Covid (e.g. check expiration dates, throw out spoiled food)
- Deep clean food contact surfaces (ongoing and per health and safety guidelines)
- Deep clean food and beverage equipment (e.g. ice machine)
- Re-stock inventory from trusted suppliers and wipe down packaging
- Be extra vigilant about preparing food to appropriate temperatures

C Healthy Staff

- Update and communicate paid sick leave policies
- Adopt the "We don't work sick" mindset
- Retrain staff on new sanitation procedures
- Limit bare-hand contact with food and customers
- Enforce regular hand washing (hourly)
- Maintain adequate distance in food prep areas

D Healthy Experience

- Consider increasing open hours and limiting capacity
- Turn your regular events into virtual experiences
- Install hand sanitizers at entrances, registers, and bathrooms
- Adopt a cashless policy and enable mobile-pay only solutions
- For takeout and fast casual, encourage order ahead and offer no-contact pick-up

GFS Sanitation Kit

- Multipurpose cleaner
- Food contact surface sanitizer
- Floor disinfectant
- Disposable, antibacterial towels
- Industrial buckets/spray bottles
- Chemical resistant gloves
- Face masks
- Hand soap & sanitizer

Get the GFS item codes [here](#)

Ginger Street in Utah created "sanitation barriers" for staff, guests, and delivery drivers

[Understanding food contact surfaces for safety's sake](#)

[Covid-19: Paid sick and safe time laws](#)

[Disinfecting in the Time of Covid-19](#)

[Food Safety: It's in your employees' hands](#)

Virtual Dining Chicago is a platform for restaurants to host online events

[ServSafe: Coronavirus, What can you do?](#)

Changes in diner behavior

Consumer behaviors have been deeply impacted by the crisis, and some of changes we are seeing today will likely continue for months until a feeling of “normal” returns. Be prepared to adapt your service to new diner needs:

Fear of public spaces: More consumers will be weary of infection in the coming months. Expectations around social distancing will be carried on to public spaces even after some restrictions are lifted.

Increased vigilance over hygiene: Most consumers will become intolerant of lapses in hygiene from servers, kitchen staff, and other diners.

Limited spending: Many diners will be affected by the economic impact of the pandemic. They will likely seek affordable options when possible, and will likely pass on expensive choices. Those not on a budget will be willing to spend on items that reduce risks and exposure and contribute to their wellness.

Increased digital interactions: Consumers are using digital tools to order food, interact with friends and family, host virtual happy hours, and take virtual classes. After the crisis they will expect the restaurants they visit to be as tech savvy as they are.

Increased take-out, delivery, and home-prepared meals: General grocery spending continues to climb, as well as at-home entertainment activities, consumers will form new habits around this, and will still seek it occasionally after the crisis.

Desire to connect: Consumers are feeling isolated, and miss socializing despite quickly adapting to utilize technology and connecting more with friends and family.

Desire to help: Many diners are willing to spend money on things that are contributing to the greater good—what they deem as providing hope or contributing to others.

These behaviors mean that health, safety, and hygiene will be top of mind, more than ever before, and not only for customers, but for staff. You will need to consider these behaviors within your operations, messaging, training, and onboarding.

Sources

[How is the Coronavirus changing consumer behavior?](#)

Revisit your menu

This is a great time to start thinking about what your offerings should include once dine-in service resumes. Work with your chef to identify items that were underperforming before the pandemic, and consider taking this opportunity to replace them—or cut them entirely. If you're adding new revenue streams, use this time to develop the connection between those new offerings and your existing on-premise items.

You will need to evaluate your menu and cater it to accommodate for a slow ramp-up (at first), different diner expectations, and new buying behaviors. There are a few things to consider when thinking about your reopening menu: the dishes you'll offer, the ways diners will buy from you, and the cost of the dishes.

Decide what dishes to offer

These should be a subset of your normal menu, think of items that will travel well, that can be made into meal kits, and that will be quicker bites for people that choose to dine in. Any dish that requires minimal handling after cooking will be perceived as safer by staff and diners.

Decide the service styles you will offer

As stated earlier, consumers will likely not rush to dine-in. While some folks will choose to eat in, you'll still have to offer a variety of service styles for diners to purchase your food. Consider turning some recipes into meal kits and adapting certain items to travel better for delivery or pickup. Remember that fewer folks will dine-in, and those that do may want to spend less time inside.

Optimize your menu's performance

Most operators will come back online with limited cash and/or with the help of loans. You'll have to understand how to optimize the business performance of your menu. Ask your GFS sales representative about the best product options for your menu, to understand which items may have the biggest impact on your bottom line.

Make sure you have inventory on hand

Take inventory of what you already have and, based on the menu changes you've decided, place an order with your distributors to stock your kitchen back up. Your GFS sales rep can help identify the best product mix to match your needs.

Sources

[Key Considerations for Rolling Out Your Menu](#)

[Best Practices for Training Staff on Your Menu](#)

Menu Checklist

Keep the following in mind when rolling out your menu after you have decided the mix of items for your menu, the service styles you will offer, and chosen the right products for your applications:

- Order food inventory
- Price your menu
- Print new menus
- Train your staff on menu changes
- Update your POS
- Update website and social media to reflect menu and offering updates
- Consider a digital-only menu to minimize contact

Welcome back your staff

As more restaurants begin planning to reopen their dining rooms, a key question will be how to bring staff back online. Safety and hygiene, payroll, rehiring, training, and scheduling will have to be sorted out. This may also be a good time to reassess your team structure and management approach.

Hiring (re-hiring)

You will need to assemble your team for reopening. A lot of operators have unfortunately had to deal with layoffs and furloughs. To bring your team back online consider the following:

1. Assess the size of the staff you'll need. Few restaurants will be able to do full reopenings immediately. You'll have to consider the team size you'll need to restart operations, and have a plan to grow the team as your operations stabilize.
2. Reach out to your pre-closure team. Assess their situation and availability. Bring back whoever you can, this will minimize training, recruiting, and onboarding costs.
3. In case some of your past employees have moved on, you may have to seek new staff. Consider posting jobs on [ziprecruiter](#), [shiftgig](#), or other recruiting platforms.
4. Update your staff and hiring documentation to reflect any changes to processes and rules.
5. Once you hire new staff, update their employment status with the relevant state and federal agencies (I-9s, W4s).
6. Plan for the start dates for managers, kitchen staff, bartending staff, and waitstaff depending on the needs of your restaurant.
7. Update your employee schedule to reflect any staffing changes and any new shifts. If you haven't already, consider using a staff management solution to help streamline your operation.
8. Update your payroll software to reflect changes in staff, salary, and benefits (if applicable).

Training

Your existing staff will need new training on safety, hygiene, and sanitation, to reduce risks associated with COVID-19. New team members will need to be fully trained, and both new and experienced team members will need to become familiar with changes to your menu and offerings.

Staff Policy Checklist

Make Health and Safety a Part of Your Culture and Standards:

- Modify your procedures to follow local and state hygiene recommendations
- Establish and document new sanitation practices
- Train your employees on the new sanitation practices prior to reopening
- Create a checklist and process to monitor compliance
- Develop and train staff on messages to customers about sanitation practices and procedures
- Put in place new safety guidelines and policies for your staff

Let customers know you're back

Forget standard marketing channels. They're costly, and because consumers are at home, your focus should be on digital channels. If you haven't been maintaining a presence online, now is the time to get going. If you have, now it's time to generate hype and excitement about your return. Regardless of where you are in your journey, experts do tell us that during crises, advertising is one thing NOT to reduce. But that doesn't mean you have to spend a lot of money, either.

Setting up your channels

If you're not sure where to start, or where your customers are spending time, [use this guide](#) to help you decide.

Differentiate your advertising

Consider cross-promotion with other local businesses, like running promotions with local breweries or distilleries, partner with small businesses to offer bundles like entertainment and dinner combos, and leverage local influencers to promote your operation and leverage their channels and followers to increase yours.

Think of how you want to show up

1. Be transparent and authentic. Consumers expect transparency and desire authenticity. Share what's happening with the business, what's happening with the people on the team, and health and safety precautions being taken.
2. Be empathetic. People want to feel understood and secure. Demonstrate this through messages about how your services, policies, and procedures have changed to the new new.
3. Connect with your community. In between messages aiming to communicate and drive traffic, but sure to share stories of how you're contributing to your community.
4. Be relevant. Guinness didn't promote large celebrations and gatherings for St. Patrick's day—their message was one of wellbeing instead. Take the current situation into consideration, and handle it with care.

What to Communicate

- The basics.** Share your hours, menu, and services offered.
- Celebrate your staff.** Share your gratitude and excitement to be back together and/or welcome the new faces.
- Entice your customers.** Run re-opening features or weekday promotions to boost traffic.
- Generate buzz.** Consider celebrating with unique to-go packages or dine-in discounts and special offers. If you have a patio and outdoor dining—even better—host it there!
- New offerings.** Promote any new offerings you tried during shelter-in-place.