

# Coronavirus guide for takeout/delivery F&B businesses

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As cities restrict mobility and businesses close, food businesses are often considered essential services and allowed to stay open—but only for takeout/delivery.

This guide offers suggestions for restaurants transitioning to this business model, but is also relevant for existing takeout/delivery businesses. Read through to the end for some low/no-cost suggestions for reducing risk of coronavirus infection at your business.

## Top 3 things to think about

1. Focus on preventing your staff from getting sick with coronavirus.
2. Be proactive and realistic in assessing your business model and menu/offering—you should anticipate and plan for a decline in disposable incomes and custom.
3. Minimize potential contamination. Strongly recommended: Go cashless, including for tips.

**For more information about reducing coronavirus risk in a F&B business, also see the main [Coronavirus Guide for the F&B Industry](#).**

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## Should you stay open and switch to takeout/delivery?

Switching to takeout/delivery takes more work and represents different economics than just planning to offer your current menu for consumption offsite. It isn't necessarily right for every business. Before deciding to switch, you should:

- **Re-run your business model**, making sure you include new costs that you may not have had to pay before—including upfront cost of keeping staff employed (especially FOH), purchasing supplies (especially takeout food containers), marketing (including setting up online ordering and payment systems), and cost of delivery services.
- Take advice so you can compare how your business and your staff fare financially if you switch to takeout/delivery or if you choose to furlough staff and temporarily close.
- Confirm that your staff are willing to continue working and can travel to work safely (e.g., walking, by bicycle, or private transport).
- Evaluate your site layout to make sure it is suitable for takeout/delivery. (See section on “Reducing infection risk”).
- Confirm that you can arrange safe and financially viable delivery. (See section on “Figuring out your delivery and payment model”).
- Make plans to re-evaluate your costs and revenues regularly, to see if the transition is making financial sense.

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## Adapting your menu offering, business model, and target customer base

If lockdowns and restrictions on mobility continue for many weeks or months, customers will have less and less money to spend on luxuries. Take proactive steps to prepare for this by adjusting your menu offering, changing your business model, and targeting different customers.

### *Adjusting your menu offering—reduce prices while protecting margins*

- **Shorten the menu:** This helps you reduce costs from prep time and wasted prep. Shorter menus are also easier for customers to navigate.
- **Cut dishes which deteriorate when packed:** Sell only dishes you can pretty much guarantee will be delicious after unpredictable handling by delivery drivers and customers. Cut dishes that are complicated to assemble, fresh garnishes that will wilt, crisp garnishes that will go soggy, and dishes that depend on extreme texture or temperature contrasts.
- **Rework dishes to simplify prep:** Reduce the number of garnishes and components in each dish. This helps protect margin by reducing the labour costs required for detailed and time-consuming prep.
- **Change the menu periodically:** Changing the menu allows you to cut complex dishes and further simplify the dishes you keep on the menu—and also reduce overall pricing to respond to changing customer demand and ability to spend.

### *Changing or adding to your business model—moving away from cooked-to-order*

School/business shutdowns and isolation requirements mean that families will need to feed more people more often than usual. Moving your business model away from cooking dishes to order can help you meet these new needs better. The GP on the suggestions below can be close to—or even more than—that of cooked-to-order foods after you account for reduced labour cost. Adding some of these alternative businesses may also allow you to maintain relationships with your ingredient suppliers while reducing waste.

- *Produce boxes:* boxes of fresh produce, your specialist items (pickles, house-made bacon, breads) and items that are restricted in supermarkets, like eggs. This may allow you to keep ordering at close to normal levels from your usual suppliers.
- *Prepped ingredient boxes:* Prepped and portioned ingredient boxes that customers can cook at home. This may allow you to keep ordering from your usual suppliers and pay some kitchen staff. Note that you will have to provide recipes/directions and adjust recipes to account for home cook capabilities, equipment, and pantry supplies.

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- *Meal plans*: Offer weekly supplies of precooked, packed meals to be purchased in one transaction and frozen/heated to order by customers. This increases per-transaction value, reduces the number of deliveries needed, and eliminates wasted prep.
- *Prepaid subscriptions* - Offer these for prep boxes/meal plans. This improves cashflow, reduces number of transactions and transaction costs, makes ingredient orders predictable, and reduces waste.

## *Targeting different customers—emphasize local customers*

Restricted mobility will deter customers who aren't local from visiting in person, and delivery to distant locations will make all cooked-to-order foods less palatable.

- **Target existing customers who are local**: This makes delivery easier to plan and reduces delivery cost.
- **Look for new local customers, especially those who need to buy in bulk**:
  - Community services organizations may be able to pay you to provide food for people in need, such as children affected by school closures, people in high-risk categories, and individuals and families in economic hardship due to business interruption.
  - Hospitals responding to coronavirus cases will also require food for healthcare workers—you may be able to set up a donation program for your customers to buy meals that you provide to these healthcare workers.
  - [Here is a list of programmes for restaurants to participate in food relief.](#)
  - [Use this form to add a food relief programme to the list above.](#)

## **Figuring out how you pack food**

Audit your kitchen setup to minimize the number of times food and food containers are handled, and ensure that any person handling food containers does so with just-washed, clean hands.

- All staff should wash hands thoroughly before handling filled or empty food containers.
- Minimize handling of unused food containers and store all unused food containers in original shipping packaging or a closed container.
- Use paper or cardboard containers and bags. Research suggests that coronavirus survives for more than 48 hours on plastic and just under 24 hours on cardboard. Double bag if possible so customers can remove external layers before bringing food inside.
- Minimize the delivery driver's need to sort through bags to find the right one:
  - Use flat-bottomed paper bags that sit upright instead of plastic bags.
  - Mark the customer's name clearly in large type at the top of the bag

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## Figuring out your delivery and payment model

**Creating an in-house delivery team:** There is no way to guarantee how third-party delivery services handle your food—and they also take a significant per-order fee. A potentially good alternative to using third-party delivery services is to switch your FOH staff to delivery. This may help you save on fees, preserve jobs by creating an in-house delivery team, and ensure that your products are handled correctly until they reach your customers.

- Default to no-contact delivery, and note this clearly on your website and menus.
- Stop accepting cash on delivery as payment.
- Set up a system for customers to order and pay in advance.
  - Delivery platforms (such as Uber Eats or Deliveroo) are more convenient but charge large fees.
  - Less convenient but cheaper (or free) options include taking orders by social media/email/phone and taking payment online or by direct bank transfer.
  - Setting up a free online form (such as with Google Forms) can simplify ordering considerably.
- If you have your own delivery team, protect their safety as much as possible by
  - Providing a suitable delivery vehicle if possible
    - Bicycle with correctly installed racking or delivery box
    - Cargo bicycle
    - Business vehicle (car, van, or motorcycle with correctly installed delivery box)
  - Reducing the number of trips your delivery staff make
    - Only taking advance orders
    - Grouping deliveries into day+time blocks by neighbourhood.
    - Setting a delivery area and declining orders from outside that area.

*If you must accept cash tips on delivery, provide delivery staff with a secured tip box, to be opened only after each delivery run. Cash must be treated as contaminated—staff must wash their hands after handling it.*

## Reducing infection risk for your staff and customers

**Strongly recommended:** Before transitioning your business model, consider temporarily closing your restaurant and furloughing all your staff for the 14-day incubation period to reduce the chance that someone on your team is infected.

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## In general:

- Stop sick staff from coming in to work. Ask all staff to report in if they feel even slightly unwell. Use a non-contact thermometer (such as a gun thermometer) to check for fever before allowing staff to begin a shift.
- Ask your staff to dramatically increase frequency of handwashing.
- Schedule much more frequent and intense cleaning and sanitizing of all equipment and surfaces in your establishment.
- Make sure regular hygiene and sanitization practices are strictly upheld—and make them even stricter if you can. (Many suggestions available in the main [F&B Coronavirus Guide](#).)
- Remind staff to be conscious of not touching things unnecessarily, including their own face, their cellphone, their clothing, cutlery, plates, condiment bottles, containers for holding service items.
- Train all staff in proper handwash procedure.
- Remind all staff at the beginning of each shift to wash hands frequently (every 15-30 minutes), and thoroughly. Ideally, wash hands every 10-15 minutes and after touching a surface which might be contaminated (including cellphones, clothing, POS/payment machines, door or equipment handles, used plates/cutlery, used napkins/serviettes, condiment bottles, and other people)
- Post handwashing instructions by every handwash point ([here's a downloadable poster set](#))
- Offer staff a secured location (such as a personal locker) to store keys, wallets, cellphones while they are on site.
- Provide a clearly marked box for staff to immediately deposit potentially contaminated items when they enter your location. Provide hand sanitizer next to the box.

## Front of house:

- Create separate order and pick-up spaces
- Have customers wait outside the location if possible, and limit the number of customers inside at any time.
- Mark inside and outside space with tape, chalk, or rope barriers to ensure customers know where and how far apart to stand or wait. 2m/6.5ft is the currently recommended distance.
- Sanitize POS, order entry system, computers, keyboards, and mice before, periodically during, and after each shift.

## Kitchen:

- Separate prep shift hours from cooking shift hours.

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- Sanitize surfaces (including door handles, prep surfaces, cooking/prep utensils) before, during and after each shift.
- Designate different parts of the kitchen for prep and for cooking.
- Physically move work stations as far apart from each other as possible. 2m/6.5ft is the currently recommended distance.

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