

# Restaurant Employee Handbook

This template is a general starting point for information only — it is not legal advice. Employment, wage, leave, and at-will rules vary by country, state, and city and change over time. Have a qualified employment attorney review and tailor this handbook before you distribute it, and delete any policy that does not apply to your organization.

## 1. Welcome

Welcome to {{Restaurant Name}}. Whether you are in the kitchen, behind the bar, or on the floor, you are part of the experience every guest remembers. This handbook explains how we work together and the rules we all follow — on food safety, tips, service, and conduct. {{Add a line or two about your restaurant's story and the kind of hospitality you want guests to feel.}} It is not a contract and does not cover every situation; when you are unsure, ask your {{manager / shift lead}}.

*Open with a short, genuine welcome and one or two lines on your mission and values. This sets the tone before the policies begin.*

## 2. Employment Basics

- Equal opportunity: {{Company Name}} is an equal opportunity employer and does not discriminate on the basis of any characteristic protected by applicable law.
- Employment relationship: {{Describe your employment relationship — e.g., employment is at-will where permitted by law, meaning either party may end it at any time, with or without cause}}.
- Employee classifications: {{Define full-time, part-time, temporary, and exempt vs non-exempt as you use them}}.
- Probationary / introductory period: {{Length and what it means, if you use one}}.

*At-will employment is not valid everywhere — outside the US, and in some agreements, different rules apply. Confirm the correct wording for every location you employ people with your attorney.*

## 3. Code of Conduct

- Give every guest warm, professional, sober service, and treat your co-workers the same; we do not tolerate harassment, bullying, or discrimination of any kind, including conduct based on any characteristic protected by applicable law.
- If a guest, vendor, or co-worker harasses you or you see a safety or food-safety problem, tell your manager or {{owner / an alternate manager}} right away; we take good-faith reports seriously and {{do not tolerate retaliation against anyone who raises a concern}}.
- Personal hygiene is part of the job: arrive showered, with clean hands and trimmed nails, hair tied back or covered, and follow our handwashing rules. {{State your policy on nail polish,

jewelry, beards, and visible cuts/bandages, consistent with your food code.}}

- Never work when you are sick with vomiting, diarrhea, fever, jaundice, or a sore throat with fever, or when you have an infected cut — report it and stay home, as the food code requires. {{Note any illnesses that must be reported to the manager or health department.}}
- No eating, drinking from open containers, gum, or smoking/vaping in food-prep, service, or storage areas; {{designate where breaks and smoking are allowed}}.
- Do not work under the influence of alcohol or drugs, and do not drink alcohol while on shift. {{State your policy on staff drinks after a shift and any tasting that is part of the job, consistent with your state’s alcohol laws.}}
- Phones stay off the floor and out of food areas during service; {{say where and when phones may be used}}.

*Cover professional behaviour, anti-harassment and anti-discrimination, attendance, dress, and conflicts of interest. Say how to report a concern and state a clear no-retaliation commitment.*

#### 4. Working Hours, Pay & Timekeeping

- Shifts are posted {{where and how far ahead — e.g., on the schedule app by Thursday for the next week}}. To swap or give away a shift, {{get manager approval / use the scheduling app}}; you are responsible for your shift until it is covered.
- Clock in and out for every shift and every unpaid break using {{the POS / time clock}} — only for yourself, only when you are actually working. Off-the-clock side work is not allowed.
- We pay {{weekly / every two weeks}} on {{payday}} by {{direct deposit / pay card}}.
- Tipped employees are paid {{your tipped cash wage}} per hour. {{If you take a tip credit toward minimum wage, explain it here and confirm total pay always meets the full minimum wage for every hour; tip-credit and service-charge rules vary widely by state and city — set this with care.}}
- You must report all tips — cash and card — accurately; we record them for payroll and tax. {{Describe your tip pool or tip-sharing arrangement and exactly who shares in it, following the law on who may be included.}}
- Non-exempt employees earn overtime as required by {{the wage-and-hour law where you work}}; get manager approval before going over {{the overtime threshold}}. Take the meal and rest breaks {{required where you work}}.
- If your pay or reported tips look wrong, tell {{the manager}} that week so we can correct it.

*State the standard schedule, pay periods, how overtime is handled for non-exempt staff, and how time is recorded. Wage-and-hour rules are heavily regulated — match them to your jurisdiction.*

#### 5. Time Off & Leave

- Time off: {{describe paid time off, if any, how it accrues, and how to request it for a business your size}}.

- Sick leave: {{describe paid or unpaid sick time and how to call in; many states and cities require paid sick leave for food workers — follow the rule where you operate}}. Staying home sick is never held against you when reported properly.
- Holidays: {{say which holidays you close or pay holiday pay, and how that works for anyone who works the day}}.
- Legally required leave — family, medical, jury duty, military, voting — {{describe what applies to a business your size; some laws cover only larger employers, so confirm what applies}}.
- To request time off, {{put it in the scheduling app / give the manager notice}} at least {{notice period}} ahead when you can. For a sick day, {{call the manager}} — do not just text a co-worker — as early as possible so we can cover the shift.

*List paid time off, holidays, sick leave, and any legally required leave (such as family, medical, or jury duty). Required leave varies widely by location — verify each entitlement before you publish.*

## 6. Benefits Overview

This section summarizes the benefits {{Company Name}} offers, including {{health insurance, retirement plan, and any others}}. Official plan documents govern in all cases; where this summary and a plan document differ, the plan document controls. {{Describe eligibility and enrolment.}}

*Keep benefits descriptions short and point to the official plan documents for detail. Never let the handbook contradict an insurance or retirement plan document.*

## 7. Workplace Health & Safety

- Food safety comes first: follow our handwashing, cooking, holding, cooling, and cross-contamination rules, and check temperatures with a calibrated thermometer where required. {{Reference the food code you follow — e.g., the FDA Food Code or your local health code.}}
- {{State your food-handler training requirement — e.g., a valid food-handler card, and a certified food protection manager such as ServSafe on each shift — and who pays for it.}}
- Work safely around the hazards of a kitchen: use cut gloves and carry knives point-down, use dry towels on hot pans, never leave fryers unattended, and clean spills on the floor immediately to prevent slips.
- Report any injury — a burn, a cut, a slip, a back strain — to your manager the same shift, however minor, so we can give first aid and document it.
- Know where the first-aid kit, fire extinguisher, hood-suppression pull, and exits are, and what to do for a fire, a power outage, or a choking guest.
- Report unsafe equipment, a broken cooler, or a pest sighting to your manager at once; you will never be in trouble for raising a food-safety or safety concern.

*Cover how to report injuries and hazards, emergency procedures, and any safety rules specific to your workplace. Reference the safety regulations that apply to your industry by name.*

## 8. Technology & Acceptable Use

- The POS, reservation system, and any tablets or phones we provide are for work; clock in under your own login and never share it or ring up sales under someone else's.
- Handle cash and payments honestly: {{describe drawer counts, voids/comps needing manager approval, and how to take and verify payments}}; cash shortages and unauthorized comps are taken seriously.
- Verify ID before serving alcohol to anyone who appears under {{your check-ID age — e.g., 30}}: check a valid, unexpired government ID, confirm the guest is at least {{legal drinking age}}, and refuse service to anyone underage or visibly intoxicated. {{Note any alcohol-server certification you require, such as TIPS or your state's program.}}
- Protect guest information in the POS and reservation system — names, phone numbers, and card details. Never write down full card numbers, share guest data, or take it home, and follow our payment-card handling rules.
- Do not post photos or comments about guests, co-workers, or anything that happens behind the scenes on social media; {{point to your social-media policy}}.
- Report a lost work device, a POS or card-reader problem, or anything that looks like tampering or skimming to your manager immediately.

*Set expectations for company devices, accounts, email, and data. Be clear about what is monitored and what is private, and reference your data-protection obligations.*

## 9. Confidentiality & Company Property

Employees are expected to protect {{Company Name}} confidential information, customer data, and intellectual property during and after employment, and to return all company property on departure. {{Reference your confidentiality or IP agreement where one applies.}}

*Tie this to any separate confidentiality, IP-assignment, or data-protection agreement employees sign, rather than restating it all here.*

## 10. Discipline & Leaving the Company

This section describes how {{Company Name}} addresses performance and conduct issues and what happens when employment ends — including notice expectations, final pay handled per applicable law, return of property, and any exit steps. {{Describe your progressive-discipline approach, if you use one, and keep it consistent with the at-will language above.}}

*If you describe a progressive-discipline process, add that the company may depart from it at its discretion — otherwise it can be read as a promise that undercuts at-will employment.*

## 11. Acknowledgement of Receipt

I acknowledge that I have received and read the {{Company Name}} Employee Handbook. I understand it summarizes current policies and is not a contract of employment, that employment is

{{at-will, where permitted by law}}, and that {{Company Name}} may update these policies at any time. I agree to follow the policies it describes.

Employee Name: _____ Signature: _____ Date: _____	Date Name: _____ Signature: _____ Date: _____

*Have every employee sign and date this page, and keep the signed copy on file. It is your record that the handbook was received and understood.*