



Practical Food Safety for COVID-19: Guidance for transitioning from Dine-In to Take-Out and Delivery Only

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Introduction

Food safety best practices can be adopted to prevent the spread and transmission of coronavirus 19 disease (COVID-19). While, there is currently no evidence to suggest that food or food packaging can transmit COVID-19, it is important to assess risks during any interaction between people, and highly touched surfaces. This factsheet will serve as a guide for operators transitioning from dine-in to take-out and or delivery only using information from the United State Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (available at:

<https://www.cdc.gov/foodsafety/communication/food-safety-meal-kits.html>).

Although vaccines have been developed for COVID-19, there is not enough information about the protection provided by these vaccines yet. The United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention will make this decision based on vaccine efficacy, vaccination rate and community spread of virus. To learn more about the data available for the United States, visit: https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/-cases_casesper100klast7days.

Health and Hygiene

- Establish procedures to include temperature checks and COVID-19 questionnaire screening prior to employees showing up for shift.
- Employees should not show up for work if they are sick with COVID symptoms including sore throat, fever, vomiting, diarrhea, etc.
- Make masks and hand sanitizer readily available for all employees.

- Limit the number of employees allowed during one shift, and limit the need for close interactions, for example, designated zones and employee assignments. Keep employees separated by at least six feet, when possible.
- Establish routines for disinfecting surface and areas of high traffic and contact points.
- Encourage frequent use of hand sanitizer in between activities, but reinforce that the use of hand sanitizer is not a substitute for hand washing (Table 1). Hand sanitizer is not effective when hands are visible dirty.

Table 1. Examples of when to wash hands, and when to use hand sanitizer.

Hand Washing	Hand Sanitizer
Before, during and after preparing food	After touching face mask
After using the restroom	Touching a surface or object another employee touched
After touching the trash	Between bagging orders
If hands are visibly dirty or soiled	Before and after deliveries or take-out orders

Packaging and Storing of Food

- Provide gloves for employees packaging food. Ensure employees wash hands between orders.
- Ensure designated areas for food that will be delivered and food that will be picked up for take-out to reduce unnecessary handling by employees.
- Maintain proper temperature and monitor if food has been held for too long. Establish a procedure for any meals not picked up by a certain time (e.g., discard). A sticker with the date and pick-up time can be placed on orders.
- Consider using tamper evident packaging to reduce the likelihood of contamination from tampering. Tamper evident packaging can be as simple as stapling food bags or applying a sticker to the bag. All packaging must be food-grade.
- Verify orders, and if allergies are provided from the customer, package allergen-containing food separately.

Pick-up and Delivery Considerations

- Establish workflows and processes for pick-up and delivery services.
- Consider having more than one employee pack orders and maintain 6 feet between other workers.
- Be sure to train employees on their specific role.

Inside Pick-up

- Limit number of customers that are able to enter the restaurant at once.
- Consider establishing one-way in and one-way out entrances.
- Add safety measures for consumers to pick-up food or interact with employees; for example, a designated pick-up area for customers to pick up from a distance, a safety partition between register and customer, a barrier to create distance between customers and employees or signage/tape to indicate where customers should stand while in line or waiting for pick-up (Figure 1).

Curbside Pick-up

- Ensure employees wear masks when bringing food to customers.
- Single-use gloves can be used during transactions.
- Remind employee to wash or sanitize hands, as soon as possible, between transactions.
- Disinfect any pens used by customers to sign receipt slips.



Figure 1. View inside restaurant with markings on floor to show 6 ft yellow tape marks for social distancing, policy to wear a mask, and signature for take-out and curbside service. Glass barrier between employees and customers.

Delivery

- Implement contact-less delivery or maintain 6 feet when delivering food. Clarify with the customer where the food needs to be dropped off, if practicing social distancing.
- Employees should have access to proper equipment/bags to keep food hot and food cold during transport.
- Employees should have gloves and hand sanitizer on their person. Whether driving their personal car or shared transportation, employees should sanitize high contact areas in the vehicle including the steering wheel, seat belt, turn signals, door handles, etc.
- Consider how many miles you will accept deliveries from (e.g., mileage radius from store) to keep food safe and a high quality.

References

US Center for Disease Control and Prevention.
2021. Food Delivery Safety.
<https://www.cdc.gov/foodsafety/communication/food-safety-meal-kits.html>.

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