

# Checklist: What Do Health Inspectors Look For?

## A Self-Inspection Checklist For Restaurant Managers And Owners

Prepare for your next health inspection with this comprehensive self-inspection checklist. As always, make sure to speak with your local health department about food safety guidelines for your area and review any local or state food codes for specific requirements and updates.

### Food Temperature Control

- Are temperature logs kept for receiving, storing, cooking, and holding food?
- Are you checking whether food is being cooked to the required minimum internal temperature?
  - Poultry (including whole or ground chicken, turkey, or duck) 165°F (74°C) for <1 second (Instantaneous)
  - Ground meat (including beef, pork, and other meat) and shell eggs that will be hot-held for service 155°F (68°C) for 17 seconds
  - Seafood (including fish, shellfish, and crustaceans) and shell eggs for immediate service 145°F (63°C) for 15 seconds
  - Pork, beef, veal, and lamb
    - Steaks or chops 145°F (63°C) for 15 seconds
    - Roasts 145°F (63°C) for 4 minutes
  - Food from plants (including fruit, vegetables, grains, and legumes) that will be hot-held for service 135°F (57°C)
- Is food being received, stored, and prepped at temperatures outside of the temperature danger zone (41°F to 135°F [5°C to 57°C])?
- Are you holding hot TCS food at 135°F (57°C) or higher?
- Are you holding cold TCS food at 41°F (5°C) or lower?
- Is food being cooled from 135°F to 70°F (57°C to 21°C) within 2 hours, and then from 70°F to 41°F (21°C to 5°C) or lower in the next four hours?
- Is food being reheated for hot holding to 165°F (74°C) for 15 seconds within 2 hours?
- Are your thermometers calibrated regularly?
- Is food being stored at the proper temperature?
  - Is TCS food being stored at an internal temperature of 41°F (5°C) or lower?
  - Is frozen food being stored at temperatures that will keep it frozen?
- Is food being properly thawed under refrigeration, submerged under cold running water, in the microwave (if cooked immediately afterwards), or as a part of the cooking process?

## Food Storage

- Is food being labeled with a common name and date marked with a use-by date?

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- Is food being stored away from walls and at least six inches (15cm) off the floor?

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- Is food being stored in food-grade containers?

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- Are raw and ready-to-eat foods being stored separately OR in the following order from top to bottom?
  - Ready-to-eat food
  - Seafood
  - Whole cuts of beef and pork
  - Ground meat and ground fish
  - Whole and ground poultry

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- Are you throwing out food that is:
  - In a container or package that is not marked with the day or date by which it should be sold, eaten, or thrown out?
  - Incorrectly marked with a day or date that exceeds a safe time-temperature combination (e.g., a date beyond seven storage days)?

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- Is food being stored in first-in, first-out (FIFO) order?

## Food Preparation

- Are food handlers aware and up to date on potential hazards and cross-contamination prevention?

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- Is produce being washed before cutting it, cooking it, or combining it with other ingredients?

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- Is food being checked for naturally occurring physical hazards before being served (e.g., bones, seeds)?

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- Is bare-hand contact with ready-to-eat food being prevented by using single-use gloves or utensils when handling it?

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- Is designated equipment (e.g., cutting boards and utensils) being used when preparing different foods?

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- Are protocols in place if a contamination or suspected contamination occurs?

## Employee Hygiene

- How, when, and where are employees washing their hands?

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- Are there hand washing signs posted in the bathroom and in sanitation stations?

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- Are employees wearing single-use gloves and changing them when required when handling ready-to-eat foods?

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- Are employees wearing clean uniforms, showering regularly, keeping fingernails clean, removing jewelry from hands and arms, and covering their wounds properly?

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- Are employees eating, drinking, smoking, and chewing gum or tobacco in designated places only?



## Facility Setup

- Does your restaurant have separate sinks for handwashing, mop washing, and dishwashing?
- Are faucets at an adequate height above the sink to prevent backflow?
- Do all sinks drain properly?
- Are floor drains clean and in good working order?
- Is plumbing in good repair and not leaking?
- Are cross-connection devices (vacuum breakers, backflow preventers) working?
- Is there adequate, covered lighting throughout?
- Are bathrooms in good working order, clean, and only stocked with bathroom necessities (toilet paper, paper towels, soap)?
- Is there adequate ventilation throughout?

## Cleaning and Sanitation

- Are food-contact surfaces smooth, durable, easy to clean and cleaned according to requirements?
- Is equipment clean, functioning, and does it meet ANSI standards?
- Are eating utensils properly cleaned and sanitized after each use using a three-compartment sink or commercial dishwashing machine?
- Are chemicals and cleaning supplies kept away from food surfaces when in use?
- Are cleaners completely rinsed from equipment surfaces after cleaning?
- Are chemicals properly labeled, stored in a separate area from food storage, and disposed of properly?
- Do employees regularly remove trash from prep areas?
- Are trash cans regularly cleaned?

## Pest Control

- Are holes and cracks in walls sealed?
- Are dumpsters kept on a level surface, covered, and an adequate distance from the restaurant?
- Are trash cans covered when not in use?
- Are there visible signs of droppings, nests, or pest damage?

## Legal

- Do all food handlers have documented food safety training?
- Is proper legal signage posted?
- Have all suspected foodborne illness outbreaks been reported to the health department?

Use this checklist on a regular basis to maintain a food safe environment that will lay the foundation for health inspections with good results.

Look for more tools and resources for creating a food safety culture at [foodsafetyfocus.com](https://foodsafetyfocus.com) and visit [ServSafe.com](https://ServSafe.com) to access food safety training for team members in the kitchen, dining areas and offices.