

Donut Shop Checklists

Opening, Fry Oil, Glaze Station, Display and Time of Day, Cream-Filled, Closing

Opening - Fryer On, Case Full

Test the oil before the first batch. Pull out anything expired. Fill the case for the morning rush. Set the bake plan before you open the doors.

PROTECT YOUR PROFIT BEFORE YOU OPEN THE DOORS

- ☐ **Test the fryer oil before the first batch, not after**
A morning reading is the cheapest one you can take. A full day of frying on bad oil ruins every single unit and can put you over your country's legal limit.
- ☐ **Work through the pull list first - cream, custard and filled items before anything else**
Filled items have the shortest shelf life and the highest risk. Clear them out before a customer or inspector finds them.
- ☐ **Put yesterday's plain items at the front with a price-cut sticker**
Sell them during the morning rush, when the most customers are in the shop, instead of throwing them away at closing for nothing.

SET THE CASE UP TO SELL

- ☐ **Fill the case to your target before the mid-morning rush**
Most breakfast customers come in during a short mid-morning window. A half-empty case at that time loses sales on food you already paid to make.
- ☐ **Put your best sellers and highest-profit items at eye level, closest to the register**
The busiest trade happens in a short window, so the first row a customer sees must earn the most profit. No published study measures donut case placement, so test this against your own hourly sell-through.
- ☐ **Set up the glaze and topping station clean: fresh glaze, a wiped pour edge, and sanitised tongs in a holder**
Keeping surfaces and tools clean at this station is the most common failure in New York City donut-shop inspections. It is also the first thing an inspector checks anywhere.

BAKE TO MATCH HOW MUCH SELLS THROUGH THE DAY

- ☐ **Check that today's bake plan matches how much sells on this day of the week, not a fixed daily number**
Sales change a lot by day of the week. A plan copied from a quiet day leaves you out of stock on a busy day, and wastes food on a slow one.
- ☐ **Split today's baking into timed batches, with the first one ready before the rush**
Baking in batches to match sales keeps fresh food ready at every time of day, instead of letting the whole day's food get old from 7 a.m.
- ☐ **Check yesterday's log of unsold items and sell-outs before you set today's amounts**
Yesterday's numbers are the only real forecast you have. Make more of what sold out, and less of what didn't sell, every morning.

HYGIENE & SAFETY

- ☐ **Wash your hands and put on clean gloves before you touch food.**
Dirty hands and gloves put germs on the food you sell.
- ☐ **Check every staff member for signs of illness before the shift starts.**
A sick worker can pass illness to customers through the food.
- ☐ **Mix sanitizer to the correct strength (ppm) before you open.**
Weak sanitizer will not kill germs on your surfaces.
- ☐ **Set up separate tools and space for allergen-friendly items before you open.**
This stops other allergens from touching safe items (cross-contact).

Fry Oil Quality and Change Schedule

Measure how much the oil has broken down. Do not guess. Oil past its limit costs you flavour and how much food you get. In most countries, it also breaks the law.

MEASURE THE OIL, DON'T GUESS IT

- ☐ **Test the oil breakdown level every day with a meter or test kit, and log the reading for each fryer**
Colour and smell do not catch this. In a Thai field study, 42 of 100 reused frying oils tested at outlets were already at or above the 25% legal limit while still in use.
- ☐ **Throw out the oil at your own action point, a little below the legal maximum**
Legal limits range from 24% to 27% oil breakdown level, depending on where you trade. In the US, this is not a legal limit - treat it as your own quality benchmark. Changing the oil early protects flavour and keeps you safe from a failed inspection.
- ☐ **Log the number of fry cycles (or fry hours) since the last oil change, next to the oil-breakdown reading**
These two numbers together tell you exactly when to change the oil, so you can order more in time. Either number alone does not tell you enough to plan with.

SET THE CHANGE SCHEDULE FOR THE OIL YOU ACTUALLY USE

- ☐ **Set the time between oil changes by the type of oil, not by the day of the week**
Different frying fats reach the discard limit at very different times. One fixed schedule for all oils either wastes good oil or serves bad oil.
- ☐ **Filter and skim the oil between batches. Remove glaze, sugar and dough bits.**
Sugar and glaze left in the oil speed up its breakdown. Every crumb left in the fryer burns oil life you already paid for.
- ☐ **Keep the frying temperature at 175–190°C (347–374°F). Don't leave the fryer sitting hot and unused between batches.**
Overheating and leaving the fryer hot for too long shorten oil life and increase acrylamide, a harmful substance, in the fried dough.

PROTECT QUALITY AND COST

- ☐ **Top up the fryer to the fill line with fresh oil every day**
A fryer that is too low breaks down faster and fries unevenly. Under-filling costs you both oil life and even-cooked donuts.
- ☐ **Test again right away after any batch that smoked, foamed a lot, or darkened quickly**
Foaming and fast darkening mean the oil broke down suddenly. One bad batch of oil ruins everything fried in it that day.
- ☐ **Record every full oil change: date, fryer, cycles run, and the oil-breakdown reading when you threw it out**
This log turns oil from an unknown cost into a per-item cost you can lower over time and use to plan your orders.

Glaze, Icing and Topping Station

The most common inspection failure in New York City donut shops happens at this table. Keep surfaces clean, use separate tools, and protect the food.

KEEP THE STATION ITSELF CLEAN

- ☐ **Wash, rinse and sanitise glaze kettles, dipping trays and the pour edge between batches**
Not cleaning food-contact surfaces after use is one of the most common citations at New York City donut shops. Sugar left behind feeds bacteria and mould.
- ☐ **Deep-clean the non-food-contact surfaces too: table legs, racks, wheels, fryer surround**
The mess around the station, not just on it, is the single most common violation at New York City donut and bakery shops. It is fully preventable.
- ☐ **Check station fixtures are sealed, cleanable and movable - no bare wood, nothing fixed flat to the floor**
Equipment you can't clean or move gets cited every time, and it becomes a hiding place for pests that you can never reach.

CONTROL UTENSILS AND TOPPINGS

- ☐ **One dedicated scoop per topping bin, stored handle-up out of the product**
Storing a scoop inside the food is a common citation in New York City donut-shop inspections. A shared scoop is also how nut allergens spread across your whole range of products.
- ☐ **Lids on every topping and filling bin when not in active use**
Open bins next to a fryer collect grease, dust and flies. Open storage is exactly what the contamination rules cite.
- ☐ **Date and rotate glaze, icing and topping batches - never top up old with new**
Adding new on top of old hides the oldest layer forever. Make a batch, date it, use it all, then start a new one.

PROTECT WHAT'S ON SHOW

- ☐ **Sneeze guard, service tongs and tissue in place at every open display point**
Food not protected during display or service gets a critical citation. About half of all New York City donut and bakery citations are critical.
- ☐ **Keep glazed stock off wet, cold or condensing surfaces**
Moisture makes the glaze sweat and crack, so the product looks stale before it really is. This has not been studied in detail. Anything that does not sell is waste you already paid for.
- ☐ **Pest and structure sweep around the station, racks and floor drains before service**
Pest and broken-plumbing citations are common in New York City bakeries. Sugar, warmth and standing water make the perfect combination for pests.

Display Turnover and Restocking by Time of Day

Fill the case at the busiest time. Keep it tight by the end of the day. Restock to match sales, rotate stock every time, and log every sell-out.

MATCH THE CASE TO THE HOUR

- ☐ **Restock at each time-of-day checkpoint against a written target, not by guessing**
Most trade happens in a short mid-morning window. An unwatched case empties fastest exactly when it earns the most.
- ☐ **Fry and finish in timed batches through the day rather than one morning run**
Timed batches keep fresh food ready at every time of day, instead of letting the whole day's food get old before lunch.

- ☐ **Group items together and turn the trays to face forward as stock sells down**
A tight, well-faced case still sells. A picked-over case tells customers they are buying leftovers.

SELL STOCK BEFORE IT GOES BAD

- ☐ **Put the oldest stock first (FIFO) at every restock - older product to the front, new stock behind**
Putting new product on top is how the oldest donut gets forgotten at the back. Rotate stock at every restock, not just once a day.
- ☐ **Pull anything past its display window and record it - never re-tray it**
Selling one stale donut can cost you the customer for good. Recording the pull is what stops you making the same mistake tomorrow.
- ☐ **Start cutting prices (markdown) in the afternoon, well before closing time**
In a controlled study, cutting prices based on time of day reduced planned waste by about a fifth, while category profit still went up. Cutting prices early beats throwing food away late.

TRACK WHAT SELLS AND WHAT DOESN'T

- ☐ **Log sell-outs by item and by hour - what ran out, and when**
A sell-out at 10 a.m. is a lost sale that never shows up in the till. Only the log turns it into the right batch size for tomorrow.
- ☐ **Log unsold items by product at each time of day, not just at closing**
Data on unsold items by time of day tells you which batch was wrong. A total at the end of the day only tells you that something went wrong.
- ☐ **Check the weekday pattern and adjust amounts for your busy and quiet days**
Sales are not the same every day of the week. Adjusting your plan is how you stop both over-baking and running out of stock (stockouts) mid-week.

Cream and Custard-Filled Product Control

Filled products carry the most risk and have the shortest shelf life. Keep them cold on arrival, cold on display, and gone by closing.

GOODS-IN: ACCEPT ONLY COLD, IN-DATE FILLINGS

- ☐ **Check the temperature of every chilled cream, custard and dairy delivery on arrival - reject anything above 8°C (46°F)**
If it's warm on arrival, its shelf life has already started running out. Reject it instead of paying full price for less shelf life.
- ☐ **Refuse anything under your minimum days-to-expiry**
Filled stock with a short date left is waste you've already paid for. Set a minimum and hold your suppliers to it.
- ☐ **Record the batch or lot code for every filling and bought-in filled pastry when it arrives**
Recalls of filled pastries happen regularly in this category. With lot codes, you can pull just one batch instead of your whole stock.

HOLD IT COLD, ALL DAY

- ☐ **Log chilled case and prep-fridge temperature at 0–5°C (32–41°F) at every checkpoint**
Keeping food above 5°C (41°F) - the US FDA Food Code limit; check your own local rule - gets cited often in New York City donut and bakery inspections. In Ireland's 997-sample FSAI survey, the three unsatisfactory and two unacceptable samples were all in units recorded at 5.1–10°C (41.2–50°F).
- ☐ **Act on any out-of-range reading immediately - move stock, log the time, tell the manager**
Catching a failing case at one checkpoint saves one tray. Catching it tomorrow costs you the whole case.
- ☐ **Fill to order or in small timed batches - don't leave filled stock on a room-temperature counter all day**
Cream-filled product left at room temperature is the highest-risk item you sell. Small batches keep the risky time short.

HANDLE FILLED PRODUCT LIKE THE RISK IT IS

- ☐ **Clean, sanitised piping bags and nozzles per batch - never top up a used bag**
Filling equipment is a direct way for germs to reach ready-to-eat food. Contamination rates in cream-filled pastry run high wherever handling hygiene slips.
- ☐ **Bin all unsold filled product at close - no carry-over, ever**
This is the one category where saving leftovers is never a choice. It has the shortest shelf life, the highest risk, and the least value if kept.
- ☐ **Keep allergen information for every filling and topping correct and to hand**
Dairy, egg and nut sit side by side on this counter. Giving the wrong allergen answer is a serious incident, not just a small mistake.

Closing - Unsold, Waste and Tomorrow's Bake

Recover what you can, record the number of unsold items, and set tomorrow's batch plan before you lock up.

RECOVER VALUE BEFORE YOU THROW FOOD AWAY

- ☐ **Run the end-of-day price cut or bundle deal on remaining plain items before you close**
Getting back part of the price is better than getting back none. Pricing based on time of day cuts planned waste without cutting profit.

- ☐ **Work through remaining stock in order: cut the price first, then give to staff or donate, and throw away only as a last resort**
Throwing food away should always be the last option, never the first choice. Every step before it gets back some of what it cost to make.
- ☐ **Throw away all unsold cream or custard-filled product**
Filled products have the shortest shelf life and the highest risk. Throw them away every night, no exceptions.

RECORD THE NUMBERS THAT SET UP TOMORROW

- ☐ **Log unsold units by item and by batch, with the reason**
Knowing unsold items by batch is what fixes over-baking. One combined total just repeats the same mistake tomorrow.
- ☐ **Log today's sell-outs and the hour each one happened**
Sell-outs are lost sales that you can't see in the till. Logging them is the only way they help tomorrow's batch plan.
- ☐ **Track waste as a percent of sales every week, against a target**
One US supermarket report puts bakery loss at 8.0% of bakery sales, compared with 2.70% store-wide. The method behind this is not stated, so use it to support having a weekly target, not to set the exact number.

SET TOMORROW UP

- ☐ **Write tomorrow's batch plan by time of day, using today's log and the weekday pattern**
One forecasting company's customers reported an average 30% cut in bakery returns when they used forecasts to plan production (reported by the vendor, a rough guide, not a target). Set the plan tonight, not during the morning rush.
- ☐ **Reorder oil, fillings and toppings that are below your minimum level (par), before the supplier's order deadline**
Missing the deadline for shortening or filling costs you a whole day of production, not just one order.
- ☐ **Shut down and cover the fryer; log the closing oil-breakdown reading and cycle count**
Covering the cooled fryer slows down overnight oxidation. The closing log is what makes your oil-change schedule predictable instead of a guess.

HYGIENE & SAFETY

- ☐ **Wash, rinse and sanitize every food-contact surface and tool before you close.**
Food and sugar left overnight feed germs and pests.
- ☐ **Check the sanitizer is still at the correct strength (ppm) before you do the final clean.**
Sanitizer weakens through the day and may need a fresh mix.
- ☐ **Take out all food waste and wipe down bins before you lock up.**
Waste left inside the store draws pests overnight.

Weekly Checks

Do these once a week, not every day.

PEST INSPECTION, CALIBRATION & EQUIPMENT DEEP CLEAN

- ☐ **Do a full pest inspection of the whole store once a week.**
A full inspection finds nests and entry points a quick look misses.
- ☐ **Calibrate every probe thermometer against a known temperature once a week.**
A thermometer can drift over time and give you a wrong reading.
- ☐ **Take apart, deep-clean and sanitize the dough mixer, sheeter and donut depositor once a week.**
Dough sticks in gaps and seams that a daily wipe does not reach.