

Pizza Parlor & Pizzeria Checklists

Receiving Goods · Dough & Cold Fermentation · Opening & Turning On the Oven · Making Pizzas & Portioning · Delivery & Keeping Food Hot · Closing, Waste & Food Cost

Receiving Deliveries

Cheese, flour, meat, and prepped toppings. Only accept stock that you can bake and sell in time. Write the date on it before it leaves the receiving area.

ONLY ACCEPT STOCK YOU CAN BAKE AND SELL

- ☐ **Check the temperature of chilled cheese, meat, and prepped toppings when they arrive. Reject anything above 5°C (41°F).**
Warm cheese and cured meats spoil early. Your shift starts already off spec.
- ☐ **Weigh every cheese delivery against the invoice before you sign for it.**
Cheese costs more than any other food item in a pizza shop. If a case is short, you lose profit before you even make one pizza.
- ☐ **Check this week's cheese price against the price you used last time you set your costs.**
Block cheese prices have moved between \$1.30 and \$2.40 per pound over four years. If you miss a price change, you cannot explain why your food cost went up.
- ☐ **Count what was delivered against what you ordered. Write down anything short, extra, or damaged, so you get credit for it.**
Too little delivered means a mid-week stockout. Too much delivered means wasted prep. You can only fix this if someone counted.

DATE IT AND ROTATE STOCK BEFORE IT LEAVES RECEIVING

- ☐ **Write the date on every chilled topping and every opened bag of cheese as soon as it arrives.**
Up to 64.1% of inspected restaurants fail date marking rules (FDA 2017–18 study). You cannot rotate or remove stock if nobody dated it.
- ☐ **Put new stock behind older stock (FIFO) in the walk-in cooler, the topping rail, and the dough cooler (retarder).**
The oldest stock gets used first. Nothing gets forgotten behind a fresh case at the back of the cooler.
- ☐ **Flag flour, yeast, cheese, or sauce that has dropped below your stock level (par). Reorder it now.**
If you are short on flour and yeast today, you will be short on dough tomorrow. Dough is the one thing you cannot buy at 6pm.

Dough, Proofing & Cold Fermentation

This is the one product you make from scratch, and you cannot sell it at a lower price (markdown) later. Mix it to the recipe. Weigh each dough ball. Use it before its time runs out.

MIX AND WEIGH DOUGH BALLS TO SPEC

- ☐ **Weigh flour, water, salt, and yeast to the recipe card every time you mix dough.**
Water content between 55–62%, with salt and yeast measured per liter of water, is what makes a good bake happen again and again. Dough you guess at by eye is a different product every day.
- ☐ **Weigh every dough ball. Use 200 g for a 22–24 cm pizza, and 280 g for a 28–35 cm pizza.**
If every dough ball is 10 g too heavy across a thousand pizzas, you give away flour, work time, and oven time for free. If a ball is too light, you get a remade pizza.
- ☐ **Label every dough box with the mix time and the time by which you must use it.**
An unlabeled box means you are guessing when you pick up the dough. Guessing is how good dough gets thrown out, and over-proofed (blown) dough gets baked by mistake.

PROOF THE DOUGH WITHIN ITS TIME WINDOW

- ☐ **Let the dough rise at room temperature for 8 to 24 hours, at about 23°C (73°F).**
This is the set time window for Neapolitan-style dough. Outside this window, you are baking a different dough than your recipe expects.
- ☐ **Write down the dough cooler (retarder) temperature at open and close. Keep it at 2–5°C (36–41°F).**
If the dough cooler (retarder) temperature drifts overnight, it can push the whole day's dough past its safe window. One failure affects every dough ball.
- ☐ **Always pull the oldest dough box first. Nothing skips ahead in line.**
If you grab the newest box during a rush, the old box sits too long and goes bad. Using the oldest stock first (FIFO) is the only thing that stops a full rack from ending up in the trash.
- ☐ **Test the dough by hand before service. If it is past its time window, use it for staff meals or throw it out. Do not put it on the peel.**
The gluten in dough weakens after the time window passes. The dough gets slack, tears easily, and will not hold a topping load. Over-proofed dough tears, bakes flat, and comes back as a remade order.

TRACK DOUGH LOSS AS A NUMBER

- ☐ **Count the dough balls you throw away each shift. Write down why (over-proofed, torn, too old, or dropped).**
No one publishes a dough waste rate for pizza shops. This log gives you your own number. Dough waste is the cheapest waste to cut.
- ☐ **Base tomorrow's dough mix on how much dough you actually used today, not on habit.**
Prep waste - not spoiled food or plate waste - makes up 45% of food waste in restaurants. Mixing too much dough is where a pizza shop's share of that waste starts.

Opening & Turning On the Oven

Get the oven to the right temperature. Get the line stocked to your set level (par). Check yesterday's numbers before the first order comes in.

TURN ON THE OVEN AND CHECK IT IS RIGHT

- ☐ **Turn on deck ovens early enough to reach a dome temperature of about 485°C (905°F) and a floor temperature of 380–430°C (716–806°F).**
If the dome is not hot enough, the pizza will not bake in 60–90 seconds. Instead, it dries out the base, and every pizza that hour is off spec.
- ☐ **Check the conveyor oven's setpoint and belt speed. Write down when you started preheating.**
A tested gas conveyor oven at 246°C (475°F) needs 7.25 minutes and 13,650 Btu to preheat. It bakes for 4.25 minutes. If you open before that, the first orders come out undercooked.
- ☐ **Bake and cut one test pizza before service. Check it against your bake card.**
Checking the base color, crust edge (cornicione), and bake time on one test pizza catches an off oven early. This costs one pizza instead of a whole lunch of remakes.

SET UP THE LINE TO SELL

- ☐ **Check the temperature of every topping pan before the rail opens. Every pan must be at or below 5°C (41°F).**
Keeping food cold (cold holding) is one of the most common failures found at pizza shops. 51.4% of NYC pizza shops have been written up for it. The FDA found this rule broken in 62.23–79.77% of US restaurants.
- ☐ **Fill the make line to your set stock level (par). Keep pans no deeper than 7.6 cm (3 in).**
Deep pans stay warm in the middle and do not cool down between rushes. Food deeper than 7.6 cm was twice as likely to cool too slowly.
- ☐ **Check that dough, cheese, and your top three toppings are at par for your busiest hour, not just for the whole day.**
Running out during your busiest hour costs you sales during that hour. It also sends the customer to try the shop down the road.

USE YESTERDAY'S NUMBERS

- ☐ **Review yesterday's dough waste, other waste, and remade orders before you plan today.**
Waste makes up about 12% of food costs, and up to 4.2% of sales. Yesterday's log is the only thing that stops today from repeating it.
- ☐ **Check that menu prices, the delivery fee, and any offers match this week's cheese cost.**
91% of operators saw food costs rise this year. A menu priced on last quarter's cheese cost is quietly losing you money.

HYGIENE & SAFETY

- ☐ **Wash your hands and put on new gloves before you touch food.**
Dirty hands and gloves can spread germs onto food fast.
- ☐ **Screen each worker for vomiting, diarrhea, or fever before their shift starts, and send home anyone with these signs.**
A sick worker can spread illness to customers through the food they touch.
- ☐ **Mix sanitizer to about 200 parts per million (ppm) strength before you open.**
Weak sanitizer will not kill germs on food surfaces.
- ☐ **Set out today's allergen menu and check separate tools are ready for allergen orders.**
The wrong tool can move an allergen into food that should not have it.
- ☐ **Walk through the kitchen and storage areas and look for pests before you open.**
A quick look can catch a pest problem before it reaches food or stock.

Making Pizzas, Portioning & Baking

This is where food cost and food safety are both decided. Keep the rail cold, weigh the cheese, time the bake, and log every remade order.

COLD STAYS COLD, HOT STAYS HOT

- ☐ **Write down the topping rail and under-counter temperatures four times a day. Keep them at 0–5°C (32–41°F).**
826 out of 1,607 pizza shops have been cited for cold food above 41°F (5°C). The rail is where this fails. Only a log catches it before an inspector does.
- ☐ **Write down the slice case and hot-holding cabinet temperature. Keep it at or above 57°C (135°F).**
Hot food that can spoil, held below the line is the most common temperature failure at pizza shops - 907 out of 1,607 NYC shops, with 1,583 citations. A lukewarm slice case sells only one slice, never two.

- ☐ **Start a 4-hour timer on anything you deliberately hold outside a safe temperature.**

The US FDA Food Code sets a limit of four hours from the moment food leaves a safe temperature, starting at 5°C (41°F) or below, or 57°C (135°F) or above. Check your own local code. After the limit, throw the food out instead of selling it.

PORTION TO SPEC, CHEESE FIRST

- ☐ **Weigh cheese for each pizza size against the build card at the start of every shift.**

Cheese is the single largest food cost. At chain scale, a \$0.25 per pound price change is worth about \$2.5 million a year. Using too much cheese per pizza causes the same damage, even if the price does not change.

- ☐ **Keep a scale, portion cups, and ladles on the line. Never portion cheese or sauce by hand.**

Hand portions get bigger under pressure and never come back down. Using a tool on the bench is what controls this.

- ☐ **Check five random pizzas each shift against the build card, weight, and size.**

No one publishes how much portion sizes vary at pizza shops. Checking five pizzas a shift builds your own number. This is usually the fastest way to cut food cost.

BAKE IT RIGHT THE FIRST TIME

- ☐ **Time each bake against spec. In a deck oven at the right temperature, this is 60–90 seconds. On a conveyor belt, it is about 4.25 minutes.**

A bake outside spec means a remade order. You pay twice for dough, cheese, oven time, and a late order.

- ☐ **Cool cooked sauces, meats, and roasted toppings in pans no deeper than 7.6 cm (3 in). Leave them uncovered, and log a temperature check.**

35% of restaurant cooling checks failed the guidance. Food that nobody watched was more than twice as likely to cool too slowly. This check fixes that.

- ☐ **Log every remade order and why it happened (burnt, wrong build, dropped, or cold on arrival).**

No published remake rate exists for pizza shops. Your own number tells you whether the loss comes from the oven, the line, or the delivery.

Delivery, Carryout & Keeping Food Hot

The pizza leaves your kitchen perfect. Everything that happens after that is what the customer actually rates.

GET IT OUT HOT

- ☐ **Time and log the minutes from order to door on every delivery.**

Customer satisfaction drops after 40 minutes. Unhappy customers waited an average of 59 minutes 24 seconds. You can only manage a number you write down.

- ☐ **Preheat hot bags. Never send a box that is not bagged, or boxes stacked loose.**

Food-temperature scores were 96.6% for the best operators and 84% for the weakest. The bag is the cheapest fix for that gap.

- ☐ **Limit how long a pizza waits on the rack. Never hold a baked pizza for the next delivery run.**

A pizza that waits for a second order loses its heat before it even leaves. It is also already on the four-hour safe-temperature clock.

KEEP YOUR DELIVERY-TIME PROMISE (SLA)

- ☐ **Flag every order that took over 40 minutes door-to-door, the same day. Write down why.**

Satisfaction drops after 40 minutes. If you only review late orders once a month, you find out after bad reviews are already posted.

- ☐ **Keep live order tracking turned on for every channel that supports it.**

Real-time tracking was linked to 6.1 percentage points higher satisfaction on speed, even for the same delivery time.

- ☐ **Compare your own delivery drivers against third-party delivery drivers each week, for delivery time and temperature complaints.**

In-house delivery arrived 8 minutes 18 seconds faster. Brands that relied on third-party drivers scored 14% lower on food temperature. Decide your mix using your own data.

PROTECT THE SECOND ORDER

- ☐ **Log every temperature or quality complaint against the exact delivery run that caused it.**

A complaint about a cold pizza costs you a refund and a lost repeat customer. If you trace it to a run, you can fix the route, driver, or bag problem.

- ☐ **Check third-party orders, free items (comps), and refunds against your records every day.**

Over 46% of shops using third-party delivery get 11% or more of sales through those channels. Unchecked free items (comps) come straight out of your profit.

Closing, Waste & Food Cost

One shift gives you three numbers worth keeping: what you wasted, what you ran out of, and what a pizza actually cost you tonight.

WRITE DOWN THE NUMBERS THAT FIX TOMORROW

- ☐ **Weigh and log waste by type: dough, cheese, prepped toppings, and finished pizzas.**
One total waste number only tells you that you made too much. Waste by type tells you which prep to cut. Wasted food costs you prep time and throw-away cost, on top of what you paid for it.
- ☐ **Log every stockout, and when it happened.**
A topping that runs out at 7pm is a stock-level (par) problem, not just a bad night. It only gets fixed if you write down the time.
- ☐ **Record remade orders, free items (comps), and refunds, with the reason for each.**
A remade order costs double in food, plus a late order. The reason you write down tells you whether to fix the oven, the line, or the driver.

WORK OUT THE COST OF A PIZZA AGAIN

- ☐ **Work out the cost again for your top three pizzas whenever the cheese price changes.**
Block cheese ranged from \$1.30 to \$2.40 per pound between 2022 and 2026. A food-cost plan based on one week's price is wrong within a month.
- ☐ **Track food cost as a percentage of sales every week. Compare it against your target range.**
Over 41% of pizza shops surveyed run food cost above 29%. Shops that check it weekly are the ones that can act on it.
- ☐ **Compare how much cheese you took from the walk-in against how much cheese you sold that week.**
The gap between cheese taken out and cheese sold is over-portioning, waste, or theft. This gap is invisible in a monthly profit-and-loss report.

PROTECT STOCK AND EQUIPMENT OVERNIGHT

- ☐ **Seal, date, and return every prepped topping to the walk-in cooler. Keep coolers switched on.**
Overnight is the longest stretch your toppings go unwatched. Date marking fails inspection in up to 64.1% of restaurants (FDA 2017–18 study).
- ☐ **Cover and date dough trays. Note which boxes reach their use-by time tomorrow.**
Tomorrow's first decision is which dough to use first. Make that decision tonight, in writing, not at the peel during a rush.
- ☐ **Shut down or turn down ovens as your policy says, and write it down.**
A tested gas conveyor oven uses 32,759 Btu per hour just sitting idle. Hours of empty idling cost money with no pizza to show for it.

HYGIENE & SAFETY

- ☐ **Wash, rinse, and sanitize every food-contact surface, board, and tool before you leave.**
Leftover food and grease overnight can feed germs and pests.
- ☐ **Test the sanitizer strength (ppm) again before you store it, and remake it if weak.**
Sanitizer weakens over time and a weak batch will not sanitize surfaces.

Weekly Checks

Do these once a week. They are not part of the daily routine.

PEST, CALIBRATION & DEEP CLEAN

- ☐ **Walk the entire kitchen and storage area once a week and check traps and corners for pest activity.**
A full weekly inspection can catch problems a daily glance may miss.
- ☐ **Calibrate every probe thermometer once a week using an ice-water or boiling-water check.**
A thermometer that reads wrong can hide unsafe food temperatures.
- ☐ **Take the dough mixer apart once a week and deep-clean and sanitize the bowl, hook, and guard.**
Old dough and flour dust build up inside the mixer and can hide bacteria.
- ☐ **Deep-clean and sanitize the walk-in cooler and dough retarder once a week: shelves, gaskets, walls, and floor.**
Deep cleaning removes spills and buildup that daily wiping does not reach.