

Sandwich Shop & Deli Checklists

Goods-In · Opening & Cold Line · Slicer & Cross-Contact · Date Marking & Rotation · Time-of-Day Production · Closing, Waste & Cold Chain

Goods-In & Receiving

Every thrown-out item and every midday sell-out starts at the door. Only accept stock that arrives cold, dated, and easy to count.

ACCEPT ONLY STOCK THAT STAYS SAFE AND SELLS

- ☐ **Check the temperature of every chilled delivery at the door (0–5°C / 32–41°F). Reject anything above 8°C (46°F)**
Warm ready-to-eat (RTE) meat arrives with its shelf life already used up. Listeria grows about twice as fast at 8°C (46°F) as it does at 4°C (39°F).
- ☐ **Reject ready-to-eat meats, cheeses and pre-packed sandwiches that have fewer days left than your minimum days-to-expiry**
The 7-day hold clock starts the day you open the pack. Stock that arrives with only two days left is waste you have already paid for.
- ☐ **Count and weigh what was delivered against the order. Record every difference so you can get credit**
Too little of your bestselling ham means a midday sell-out. Too much means extra loss you carry until the end of the week.
- ☐ **Check vacuum-sealed packs, modified-atmosphere packs and printed date codes on every case**
A broken seal or split pack counts as an open pack. It loses its printed shelf life the moment it comes off the van.

PUT IT AWAY SO IT ROTATES ITSELF

- ☐ **Label every case when it arrives with the date it was received and the manufacturer's use-by date**
You cannot rotate stock that was never dated. More than half of delis inspected get date marking wrong.
- ☐ **Store raw meat and poultry BELOW ready-to-eat meats, cheeses and salads, and keep them separate**
1 in 10 delis stores raw meat above ready-to-eat food. One drip can contaminate every sandwich made from that shelf.
- ☐ **Put new stock behind old stock on every shelf, in the walk-in fridge, and in every prep-well backup**
Two minutes of putting the oldest stock first (FIFO) when it arrives costs less than a list of discards on Friday.

Opening & Cold Line Set-Up

Check the cold before you build. Check the product's temperature, clear the discard list, then set up the line and the case to sell.

COLD BEFORE YOU BUILD

- ☐ **Check and record the temperature of every prep well, under-counter fridge, walk-in fridge and display case before you build the first sandwich (0–5°C / 32–41°F)**
Keeping food at the right temperature is the rule delis fail most often. The reading tells you whether last night's stock is still safe to sell.
- ☐ **Check the product's temperature, not the air. Read the top of the pan in each well**
The air temperature can look fine while the top inch of tuna mayo or sliced chicken sits well above 5°C (41°F).
- ☐ **Fill prep-well pans only to the fill line. Keep lids and covers closed between builds**
Overfilled pans and open lids are the two easiest ways to push a well above 5°C (41°F) before lunch.
- ☐ **If any unit is above 5°C (41°F), move the stock, record the time, and stop building from that unit until it is back in range**
Food held above 8°C (46°F) cannot be sold. Decide that at 9am, not after it is on a customer's plate.

YESTERDAY'S STOCK DECIDES TODAY'S LINE

- ☐ **Work through the discard list FIRST. Take anything at day 7 or beyond off the line before doors open**
Under the US FDA Food Code, opened ready-to-eat food has a strict 7-day life at 5°C (41°F) or below. Use the day count your own food code requires. It is better to pull it at open than to find it mid-shift.
- ☐ **Check the date on every open condiment, dressing, spread and prep container poured into another container**
Tubs poured into another container have no printed date. Undated prep is the part of rotation you can't see, and the easiest discard to miss.
- ☐ **Check yesterday's unsold-by-filling and sell-out log before you start prepping**
It is the only number that tells you to make six tuna and twelve chicken today, not the other way round.

SET THE LINE AND THE CASE UP TO SELL

- ☐ **Confirm every bestselling filling, bread and salad item is in stock and at the right level (par)**
A bestseller that's out of stock at 12:15 is a sale you can never get back, and a customer who tries the shop next door instead.
- ☐ **Set up the grab-and-go case: full, faced, with labels and use-by dates facing outward**
A faced case shows you what you actually have. Visible dates stop the oldest pack from being the last one picked up.

HYGIENE & SAFETY

- ☐ **Wash your hands with soap before you put on gloves.**
Gloves do not stop germs that are already on dirty hands.
- ☐ **Wash your hands again after every break, including bathroom breaks.**
A break lets new germs onto your hands before you touch food again.
- ☐ **Check the allergen list against today's fillings before you open the line.**
Staff need the right allergen facts ready before the first customer asks.
- ☐ **Look for pest signs, such as droppings or gnaw marks, around the prep area before you open.**
A quick look catches a pest problem before customers see it.

Slicer, Boards & Cross-Contact

The slicer touches almost every ready-to-eat item you sell. Clean it every four hours, check for damage, and test your sanitiser.

THE FOUR-HOUR RULE

- ☐ **Take apart, clean and sanitise every slicer at least every 4 hours of use**
Only about half of delis manage to do this. A single outbreak traced back to the blade can cost more than a year of counter profit.
- ☐ **Clean and sanitise between allergen changes and between types of meat, not just on the schedule**
Cheese, then turkey, then ham on the same blade is how an allergen, or raw meat touching ready-to-eat food, gets passed on between scheduled cleans.
- ☐ **Check the blade, blade guard, ring guard, gauge plate and carriage for damage every 4 hours**
3 in 5 delis use damaged slicers, and only 1 in 4 check them for damage. Food hides from cleaning exactly where the damage is.

SANITISER THAT ACTUALLY SANITISES

- ☐ **Test how strong your sanitiser is with strips at set-up and every time you refill the bucket**
1 in 4 delis uses sanitiser at the wrong strength. A bucket that's too weak makes every wipe-down pointless.
- ☐ **Clean and sanitise boards, tongs, scoops, spreaders and slicer trays on the same 4-hour schedule**
Dirty equipment is the problem in nearly two-thirds of delis inspected. It is never only the slicer.
- ☐ **Deep-clean the areas that don't touch food: the slicer base, drip tray, drains, and the floor under the line**
Most deli samples that test positive for listeria come from surfaces that don't touch food - floors, drains and squeegees. Bacteria living there can spread to the blade.

HANDS AND WORKFLOW

- ☐ **No bare-hand contact with ready-to-eat fillings. Change gloves when you switch tasks and after handling any raw food**
Over half of food-worker norovirus outbreaks involve bare hands touching ready-to-eat food. The sandwich is the last thing touched before it is eaten.
- ☐ **Check for sick staff at the start of each shift. Nobody with vomiting or diarrhoea should work on the build line**
Infected food workers cause most foodborne norovirus outbreaks where the source is known.

Date Marking, Rotation & Shelf Life

Every opened pack gets a clock. Made-fresh and pre-packed get different clocks. Condiments get one too.

EVERY OPENED PACK GETS A CLOCK

- ☐ **Mark the date on every ready-to-eat pack the moment you open it - the opened date AND the discard date**
More than half of delis get date marking wrong. An open pack with no date has no proof of a safe shelf life at all.
- ☐ **Opened ready-to-eat food gets a maximum of 7 days at 5°C (41°F) or below under the US FDA Food Code (3-501.17), counting the day you open it as day 1. Check the matching limit in your own food code**
That limit exists to control listeria growth. Day 8 means throw it out. Don't guess.
- ☐ **Use a shorter clock for your highest-risk items: sliced deli meats and soft cheeses**
Retail-sliced deli meat causes most deli-meat listeriosis deaths. A long shelf-life date is most dangerous for this product.

MADE-FRESH COMPARED WITH PRE-PACKED

- ☐ **Give made-fresh sandwiches a same-day use-by date, unless you have proven a longer shelf life through testing**
A sandwich built in-store has no modified atmosphere and no testing behind it. Sell it today or throw it out.
- ☐ **Cap chilled pre-packed shelf life at 10 days at 3–8°C (37–46°F), unless you have a documented extra safety step. Check the matching rule where you operate - in the UK, this follows ACMSF/FSA guidance**
Without a step that controls botulism risk - storage below 3°C (37°F), a proven heat step, or the right acid, salt or moisture level - 10 days is the limit, not a goal.

- ☐ **Re-check use-by dates on every pre-packed sandwich in the case at each part of the day**
Studies show expired packs do reach the checkout. Selling one out-of-date sandwich costs more than a full day's profit from that case.

ROTATE THE STOCK NOBODY DATES

- ☐ **Date and rotate condiments, dressings, spreads, marinades and pickles that you pour into another container**
Bulk tubs poured into squeeze bottles lose their printed date. This is the most common rotation mistake on a sandwich line that nobody notices.
- ☐ **Check the walk-in and every prep-well backup and put the oldest date at the front (FIFO)**
Rotation only works where staff actually reach. The back of the walk-in is where discards pile up.

Time-of-Day Production & Grab-and-Go

Prep for the next two hours, not to fill the case at open. Keep the case full, cold and dated, and get value back before you throw food away.

BUILD TO THE NEXT TWO HOURS

- ☐ **Split the day into dayparts and prep each filling for the next two hours of demand**
Making too much is waste you already paid full price for. Restaurants that worked on cutting kitchen waste cut it by 26% on average in the first year.
- ☐ **Hold back an agreed share of every batch for the next part of the day**
The batch you make at 9am to fill the case is the batch you bin at 4pm.
- ☐ **Set a stock target (par) for each filling at each part of the day, and prep to that target, not to the size of the pan**
A stock target (par) is what stops a bestseller selling out at 12:15 while a slow filling sits until close.

KEEP THE CASE SELLING

- ☐ **Refill the grab-and-go case and turn everything forward at every part of the day**
Stock left in the back fridge cannot rotate or sell. Refilling it at each part of the day keeps your counted stock matching your actual stock.
- ☐ **Combine stock and turn it forward as it sells down, with the oldest date at the front**
Keeps the case readable at a glance and makes the oldest pack the easiest one to pick up.
- ☐ **Check the temperature of the grab-and-go case at every part of the day, not just at open**
Display case temperatures can rise during the day. Nearly a third of pre-packed sandwiches checked at retail sat above 5°C (41°F).

GET VALUE BACK BEFORE YOU THROW IT AWAY

- ☐ **Work through your near-date steps in order: cut the price (markdown) → staff meal or donation → throw away**
Throwing food away should be the last resort, never the first choice. Every step before that gets back cash you already spent.
- ☐ **Log unsold items by filling and by part of the day, with a reason code**
Unsold counted by filling is the only number that changes tomorrow's prep sheet.
- ☐ **Keep cooked ingredients (chicken, bacon, roast veg, eggs) on their own cooling and holding schedule**
Cooling is the second-biggest temperature mistake in delis. A slow-cooled chicken becomes tomorrow's discard, or worse.

Closing, Waste & Overnight Cold Chain

Record the numbers, take the line apart properly to clean it, and protect the cold chain overnight. Fridges stay ON.

RECORD THE NUMBERS

- ☐ **Enter today's unsold and sell-out figures into the log before you leave**
Tomorrow's prep sheet and next week's order both come from this number. Do it every night, without fail.
- ☐ **Record every discard with its reason: out of date, out of temperature, damaged, unsold**
Reason codes tell you whether the problem is over-prepping or a failing fridge. The fixes for those are completely different.
- ☐ **Note every filling that sold out and the time it went**
Sell-out times give you next week's stock targets (par levels) for free.

TAKE THE LINE APART

- ☐ **Take apart and fully clean the slicers, boards, wells, drip trays, drains and the floor under the line**
Overnight is when listeria can settle in and stay. In one study, the same strains kept coming back month after month in nearly half the delis tested.
- ☐ **Cover, date and combine all open ready-to-eat product. Nothing goes back into storage unlabelled**
An unlabelled tub at close is an undated tub at open, and an automatic discard in the morning.
- ☐ **Check that raw meat sits below and separate from ready-to-eat food in every fridge before you lock the doors**
Overnight is the longest stretch of time a drip has to reach ready-to-eat stock.

PROTECT THE COLD CHAIN OVERNIGHT

- ☐ **Record the closing temperature on every unit. Fridges stay ON, doors shut, nothing overfilled**
A unit whose temperature rises overnight can cost you the whole cold line in the morning, not just one pan.
- ☐ **Reorder anything below your stock target (par) before the supplier's cut-off time**
Missing the cut-off is a morning stockout on your best-selling filling - the most avoidable lost sale there is.

HYGIENE & SAFETY

- ☐ **Look for pest signs, such as droppings or gnaw marks, around the prep area before you lock up.**
You catch a pest problem sooner if you check every night, not just once a week.

Weekly Checks

Do these once a week, not every day.

FULL PEST INSPECTION

- ☐ **Do a full pest inspection once a week, not just a daily glance.**
A full inspection finds nests and entry points that a quick daily look misses.
- ☐ **Check every trap and bait station, and write down what you find.**
A written record shows a pattern building before it turns into an infestation (a pest takeover).

THERMOMETER & PROBE CALIBRATION

- ☐ **Test every thermometer and probe once a week in ice water.**
A probe that reads wrong can hide food that is out of a safe temperature.
- ☐ **Check that the probe reads 0°C (32°F) in the ice water.**
This is the standard test point for a correct reading.
- ☐ **Adjust or replace any probe that does not read correctly.**
A wrong reading is worse than no reading. Staff will trust a bad number.

DEEP-CLEAN & SANITIZE THE SLICER

- ☐ **Once a week, take the slicer apart further than the daily clean.**
This reaches hidden parts behind the guards where debris can build up over time.
 - ☐ **Sanitize every part you removed, then dry and reassemble the slicer before service.**
A wet food-contact surface can grow germs faster than a dry one.
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