

DFW Restaurant Opening Checklist

Opening a restaurant in Dallas–Fort Worth takes more than a great concept. Use this checklist to make sure nothing falls through the cracks.

01 Concept + Positioning

- Define your concept — who you are, who you serve, what makes you different
- Research the competitive landscape in your target DFW neighborhood
- Identify your target audience demographics and dining expectations
- Develop a clear brand positioning statement
- Create a realistic business plan with financial projections
- Establish your price point and service model

02 Location + Lease

- Evaluate neighborhoods for demographic fit (Bishop Arts ≠ Uptown ≠ Frisco)
- Assess foot traffic, parking, and accessibility at different times
- Verify zoning allows your intended use (especially alcohol service)
- Engage a restaurant attorney before signing any lease
- Negotiate tenant improvement allowances and build-out timelines
- Understand landlord expectations and building restrictions
- Confirm occupancy limits support your revenue targets

03 Permits + Licensing

- Apply for TABC liquor license early (allow 3–6 months)
- Obtain food service permit from local health department
- File for city business license and sales tax permit
- Obtain building and construction permits for any build-out
- Schedule pre-opening health inspection
- Obtain certificate of occupancy
- Apply for food handler certifications for all staff
- Verify fire code compliance and schedule inspection

04 Design + Build-Out

- Engage a hospitality design partner before finalizing floor plan
- Design space for operational efficiency (kitchen flow, server paths, POS)
- Select durable, restaurant-grade finishes and materials
- Plan lighting for concept and time-of-day transitions
- Design bar and host stand for visibility and guest flow
- Get multiple contractor quotes — budget 15–20% contingency
- Plan phased construction timeline with inspection checkpoints
- Install kitchen equipment and verify all code requirements

05 Brand + Identity

- Complete brand identity (logo, colors, typography, photography style)
- Design and produce all signage (exterior, interior, wayfinding)
- Build website with menu, hours, location, and reservation system
- Set up social media accounts and pre-opening content calendar
- Design and print menus, business cards, and collateral
- Commission professional photography of completed space

06 Operations + Launch

- Hire and train staff on service standards and brand values
- Develop and test full menu with costing
- Set up POS, reservation, and inventory management systems
- Plan soft opening with friends-and-family events
- Develop opening marketing campaign (press, social, local outreach)
- Schedule official opening date with clear event plan
- Establish vendor relationships and supply chain
- Create standard operating procedures for every position