STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE

Restaurant Opening Checklist SOP

Document no.	SOP-RST-001
Revision	1.0
Owner	General Manager
Effective date	September 15, 2026
Review cycle	Every 12 months

1. Purpose

To open the restaurant safely and consistently, with the dining room, cash drawers and staff ready before the first guest arrives.

2. Scope

Applies to the front of house opening routine, including the building walkthrough, cash setup and dining room preparation. Kitchen opening tasks are covered by the kitchen's own procedures.

Definitions

Cash float	The starting amount of cash placed in a drawer or safe at the start of a shift so change can be made.
Pre-shift briefing	A short meeting before service to cover specials, 86'd items, reservations and any guest notes.
Manager on duty	The manager responsible for the shift, with authority to make decisions on service, staffing and guest issues.

3. Responsibilities

Shift Manager	Unlocks the building, runs the safety walkthrough, sets up cash floats and leads the pre-shift briefing.
Host	Prepares the host stand, confirms the reservation list, and sets up menus and waitlist tools.
Server	Sets up their section, checks table settings, and attends the pre-shift briefing.
Bartender	Opens and stocks the bar area and prepares the bar's cash drawer.

RACI matrix

Activity	Shift Manager	Host	Server	Bartender
Unlock and complete the safety walkthrough	R/A	I	I	I
Count and set up cash floats	R/A	-	I	C
Prepare the host stand and reservation list	I	R/A	-	-
Set up dining room tables and	A	C	R	-

Activity	Shift Manager	Host	Server	Bartender
sections				
Run the pre-shift briefing	R/A	C	C	C

R = Responsible, A = Accountable, C = Consulted, I = Informed

4. Materials and PPE

Materials, tools and systems

- Building keys and alarm code
- Opening safety walkthrough checklist
- Cash float count sheet
- Point of sale (POS) system
- Reservation and waitlist app
- Table setting and section map
- Daily specials and 86'd item list

5. Procedure

Step	Task	Owner	Done
5.1	**Unlock the building and disarm the alarm** The shift manager arrives at the scheduled opening time, unlocks the front and back doors, and disarms the security system, noting the arrival time in the opening log.	Shift Manager	☐
5.2	**Walk the building for safety and damage** Walk through the dining room, restrooms, parking area and exits to check for damage, spills, burned-out lights or anything unsafe before opening to guests. **Checkpoint:** All exits, walkways and restrooms are clear, lit and free of hazards.	Shift Manager	☐
5.3	**Turn on systems and check equipment** Power on the POS terminals, music system, dining room lighting and any guest-facing displays, and confirm each is working correctly.	Shift Manager	☐
5.4	**Count and log the cash float** Count the starting cash float for each drawer against the count sheet with a second person present, and record the amount before the drawer goes into service. **Checkpoint:** Each cash float count matches the amount set by house policy and is signed by two people.	Shift Manager	☐
5.5	**Set up the bar cash drawer and stock** Count the bar's starting float, stock ice, garnishes and glassware, and confirm the POS terminal at the bar is logged in and ready.	Bartender	☐
5.6	**Prepare the host stand** Set out menus, wipe down the host stand, confirm the reservation list for the shift, and open the waitlist app or seating chart.	Host	☐
5.7	**Set up dining room tables and sections** Wipe down tables, straighten chairs, and reset table settings to the standard, then confirm section assignments on the floor plan with the shift manager.	Server	☐

Step	Task	Owner	Done
5.8	**Check restrooms and guest areas are stocked** Confirm restrooms have soap, paper towels and toilet paper stocked, and that waiting areas are clean and tidy before doors open.	Host	☐
5.9	**Review reservations and special requests** Go through the reservation list for the shift, noting large parties, high chairs, allergy notes or other special requests, and share them with the team.	Host	☐
5.10	**Confirm specials and 86'd items with the kitchen** Check with the kitchen for the day's specials and any items that are 86'd, and update the specials board and POS accordingly.	Shift Manager	☐
5.11	**Run the pre-shift briefing** Gather the team briefly before doors open to cover specials, 86'd items, reservations, staffing and any guest notes from the previous shift.	Shift Manager	☐
5.12	**Unlock the doors for service** At the scheduled opening time, unlock the guest entrance, turn on the open sign, and confirm the host is ready at the stand.	Shift Manager	☐

6. Quality checks

- Safety walkthrough is completed and signed off before doors open.
- Every cash float is counted, logged and matches house policy.
- Reservation list and special requests are reviewed and shared with the team.
- Pre-shift briefing happens before the doors are unlocked.

7. Records

- Opening safety walkthrough checklist
- Cash float count sheet
- Pre-shift briefing notes
- Reservation and special request list

8. KPIs

- Percent of shifts opening on time
- Cash float discrepancies at opening per month
- Safety issues found during the opening walkthrough
- Staff attendance at the pre-shift briefing

9. Common mistakes

- Counting the cash float alone instead of with a second person present.
- Skipping the safety walkthrough when the manager is running behind.
- Unlocking the doors before the pre-shift briefing has covered 86'd items.
- Forgetting to check restroom supplies before service starts.

10. Revision history

Revision	Date	Description	Reviewed by
1.0	September 15, 2026	Initial release	Alexa Uskova

Approval

Prepared by	Approved by	Date

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