

Operational Adjustments

OVERVIEW

The post-COVID-19 reality requires a different course of action for guests to feel confident and comfortable going out again. This section outlines strategies and procedures that operators can implement to protect diners and plan for a post-pandemic restaurant relaunch.



STAFFING + REHIRING

A look at the regions around the globe that have lifted the restrictions following the pandemic indicate that business will only gradually return to pre-COVID-19 levels. During this time, there are a number of key considerations to rebuilding your staff and returning your business to a pre-pandemic level of service.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

Top Performers

Focus on maintaining or rehiring your core team of top performers — an essential service team who will be receptive to change, willing to take on multiple roles and responsibilities, and flexible enough to help the business evolve as the environment shifts. Cross-train your essential workforce to wear as many hats as possible during slower periods of recovery.





Respond to New Business Levels

Once you have gotten your core service and management team back on board, carefully bring back staff only as the levels of the business increase. There will be a rush from service staff eager to get back to work, but it is important to be as careful as possible with available capital and only bring back the remaining team as the business dictates.

Plan Ahead

Lay out different scenarios for occupancy, revenue, and business patterns over time to develop a flexible minimum labor model that can prepare you to respond to a quick recovery or an extended one. Remember to plan for additional cleaning staff as part of your essential front of house labor force.

Capital Considerations

Businesses that are taking advantage of the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) or the Employee Retention Credit (ERC) from the stimulus bill (see specifics on page 10) have to adhere to the specific requirements of the loan, which include using 75% of the borrowed funds for payroll over a certain period of time. Failure to adhere to these guidelines may prevent some or all of the funding from being forgivable.

Employee Culture

As restrictions are lifted, there will be a glut of service staff in the market. This is not a time to take advantage of employees eager to get back to work or a time to race to the bottom with wages. While the long-term success of the business involves being prudent with capital, it is important for operators to maintain the culture and loyalty that will inspire your core staff and make your most important team members want to come back to work.



CHAPTER ONE

Social Distancing

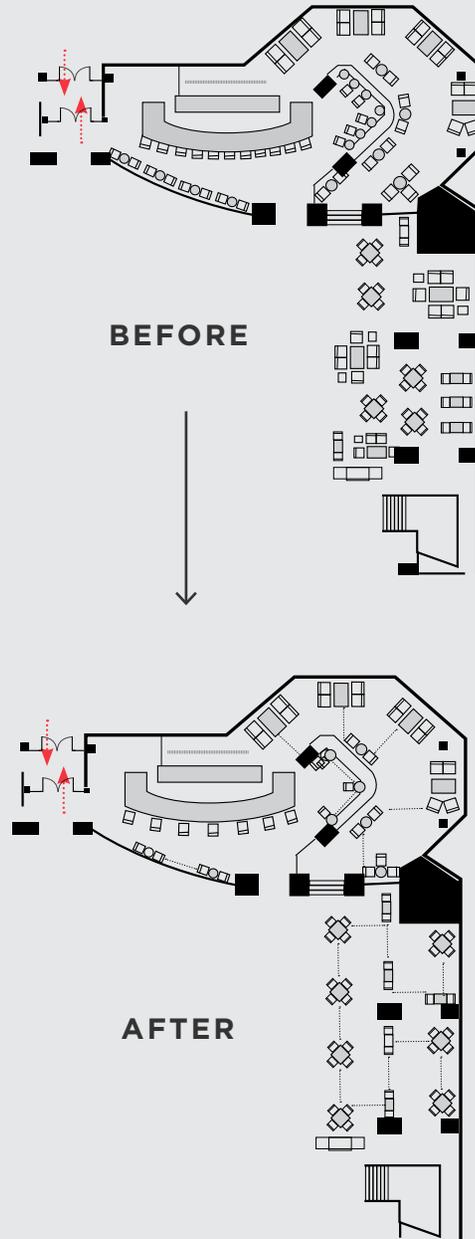
The physical layout of your business must change to be compliant with local regulations and to help guests feel safe in your establishment. This chapter reviews the potential impact of social distancing on your business.

SOCIAL DISTANCING GUIDELINES

Below are some initial thoughts on the tactics that restaurants and bars may need to employ to deal with the post-pandemic mindset.

For table service restaurants, COVID-19 will have a long-lasting impact far beyond the lifting of restrictions. The population split between those who have been infected and survived and those who have not yet been infected will create significant logistical and operational challenges. We won't be returning to "normal" — businesses will have to adjust, starting with strict social distancing guidelines and business practices. As much as food and beverage experiences have become more social than ever, we may see a temporary "privatization" of the dining experience.

- Increase spacing between tables to ensure six feet of separation between tables or groups of guests.
- Based on your jurisdictional requirements, completely eliminate bar service until approved by the locality or group bar stools in twos and create a six foot separation between these groupings
- Increase private or semi-private dining opportunities with flexible partitions or screens.
- Ensure service pathways that are comfortable for guests and staff.
- Remove excess tables and chairs to facilitate the distancing requirements.
- Determine storage areas for excess furniture and equipment.
- Add hand sanitizing stations throughout the restaurant, specifically at the entrance, near each server station, and near the entrance to the restrooms.



SOCIAL DISTANCING GUIDELINES

As jurisdictions around the country phase into recovery, clear guidance on how to adapt your establishment for the “new normal” has begun to emerge

Seating Scenarios

Every physical space is different with a variety of seating types and arrangements available. The following scenarios present different seating options that should provide clear direction on how to meet or exceed social distance guidelines in a number of different situations and environments.

Physical Barriers

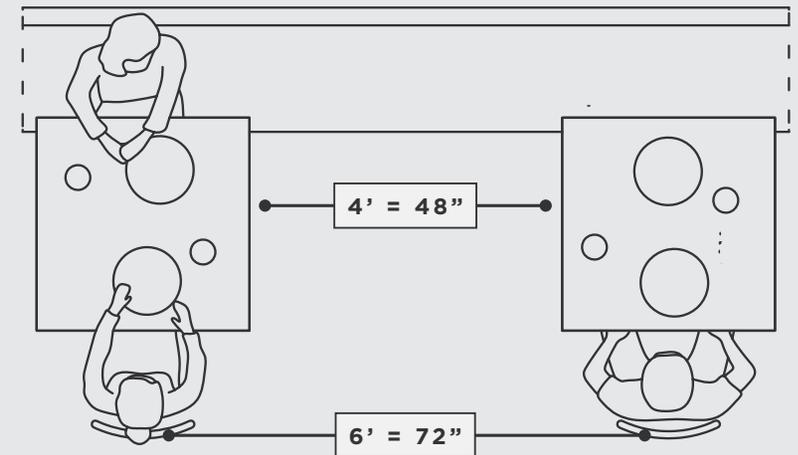
In addition to existing furniture, a number of these scenarios introduce physical barriers that reduce the amount of space needed in between dining groups. In general, these barriers must meet a number of criteria to qualify. General guidelines from the Los Angeles County Public Health Officer are helpful in understanding which kinds of physical barriers can help assist in social distancing efforts:

- *Barriers must be made of impermeable, cleanable, and durable materials that can be frequently cleaned and sanitized.*
- *Barriers must provide at least six-foot high barrier and must be installed per fire and building codes so as to not interfere with the ventilation or fire protection systems.*
- *Barriers must provide 30 inches above the table and other dimensions noted in diagrams.*

SCENARIO 1

Side by Side Seating (no barrier) Table, counter, or banquette seating

- 4 feet between tables, edge to edge
- 6 feet between chair centers

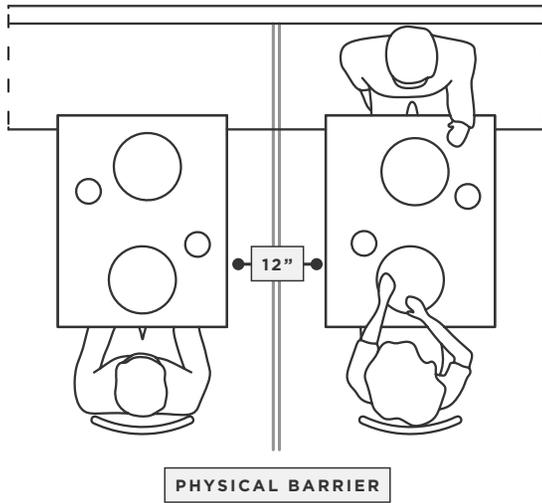


NOTE

The detailed guidance provided in this guide has come courtesy of [Los Angeles County](#). However, nearly every state and local jurisdiction has published at least some guidance on social distancing your dining rooms and outdoor spaces that is in line with this information. Please ensure that the guidance found in this toolkit fits within the guidelines for your state or local jurisdiction.

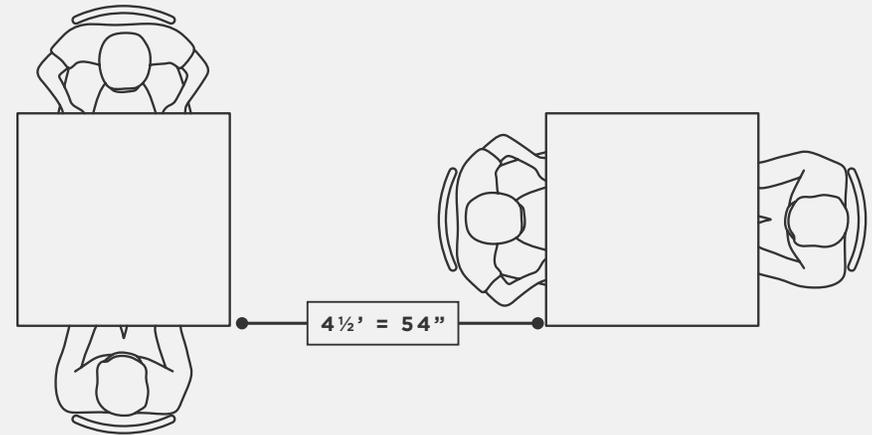
SCENARIO 2 Side by side (with barrier)

- 1 feet between tables, edge to edge
- No spacing required for counter seating
- Barrier must extend at least 18" from table edge



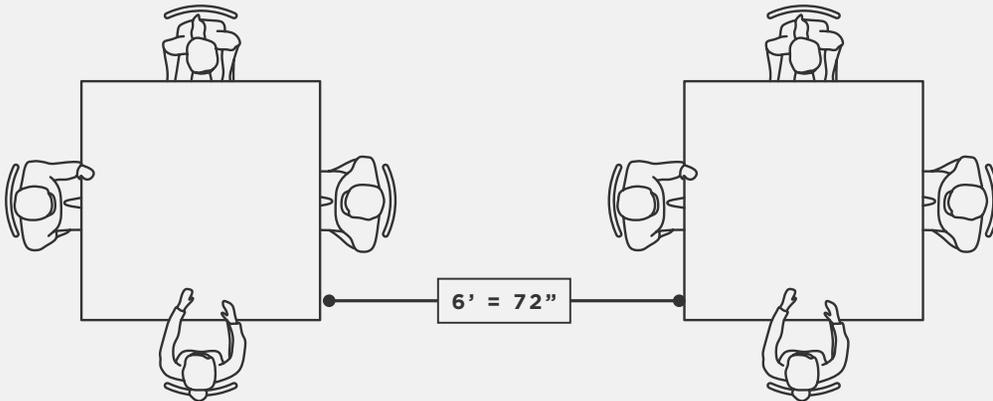
SCENARIO 3 Perpendicular (no barrier)

- 4.5 feet between tables, edge to edge
- 6 feet between chair centers



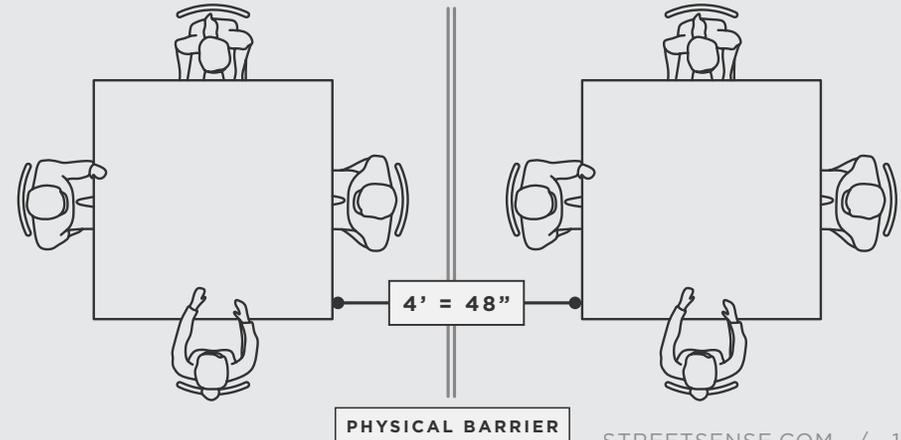
SCENARIO 4 Back to back (no barrier)

- 6 feet between tables, edge to edge
- If booth seating is back to back, with no physical barrier, this distance also applies



SCENARIO 5 Back to back (with barrier)

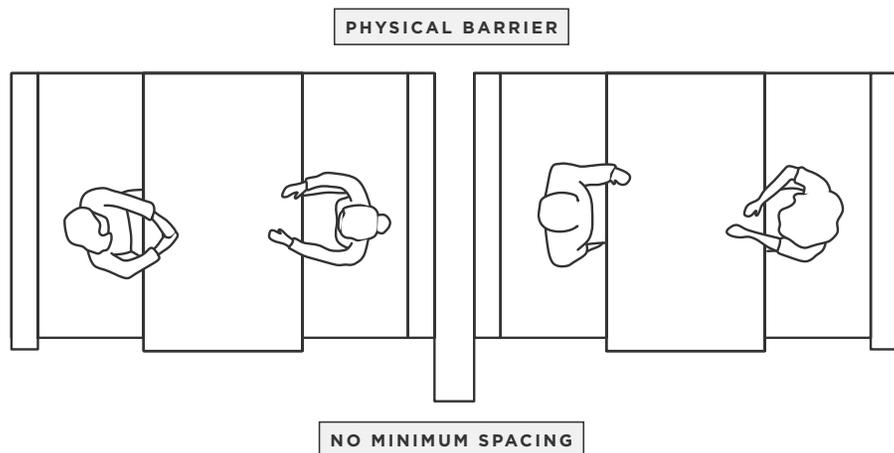
- 4 feet between tables, edge to edge
- Barrier must extend at least 18" from table edge
- Barrier must extend to cover chair depth



SCENARIO 6

Booth Seating (with barrier)

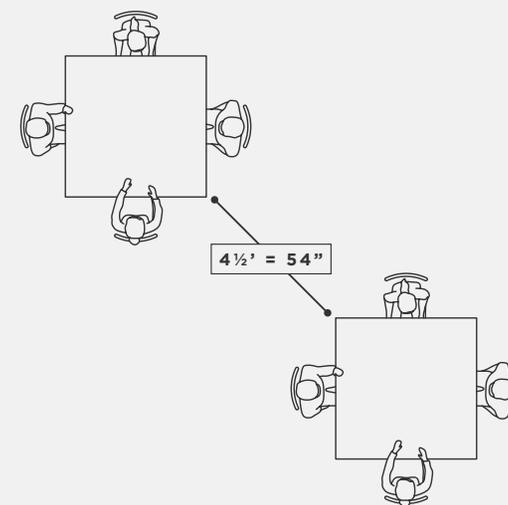
- No minimum distance required if barrier extends at least 30 inches above the table, is impermeable and can be easily disinfected and cleaned



SCENARIO 7

Staggered (no barrier)

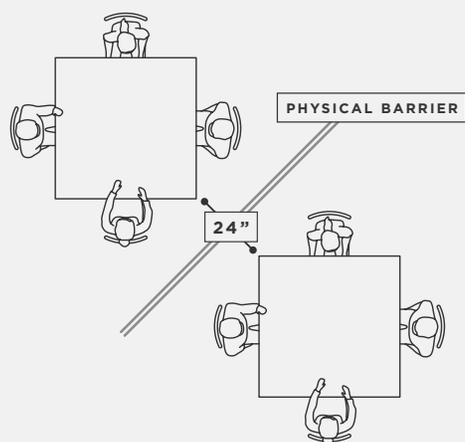
- 4.5 feet between tables, edge to edge
- 6 feet between chair centers
- Applies to all table shapes



SCENARIO 8

Staggered (with barrier)

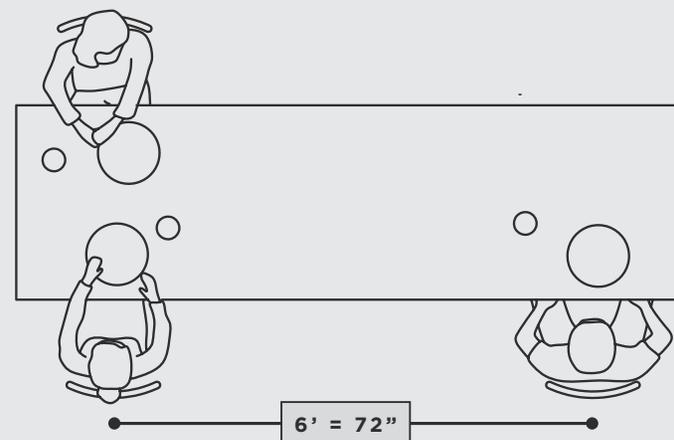
- 2 feet between tables, edge to edge
- Barrier must cover the entire seat depth



SCENARIO 9

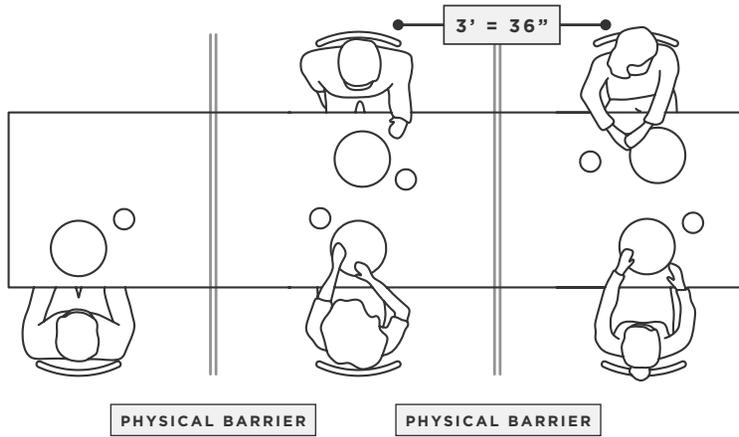
Communal Seating (no barrier)

- 6 feet between closest member of another party



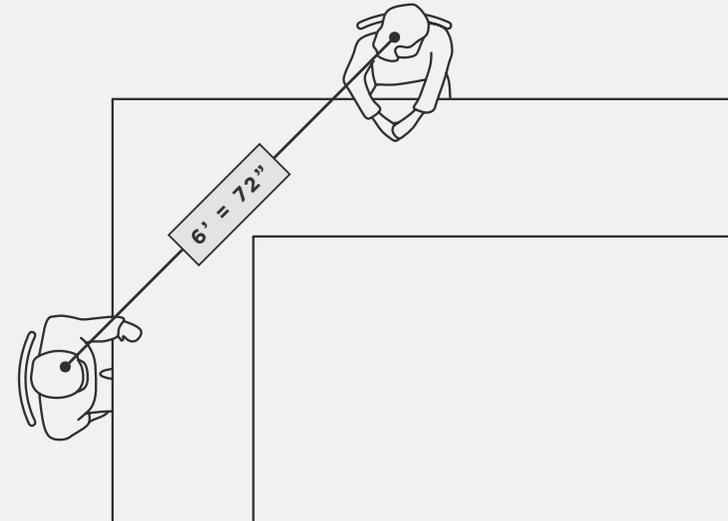
SCENARIO 10 Communal Seating (with barrier)

- 3 feet between chair centers
- Barrier must extend 30" above table
- Barrier must extend 18" beyond table
- Also applies to counter seating with barrier



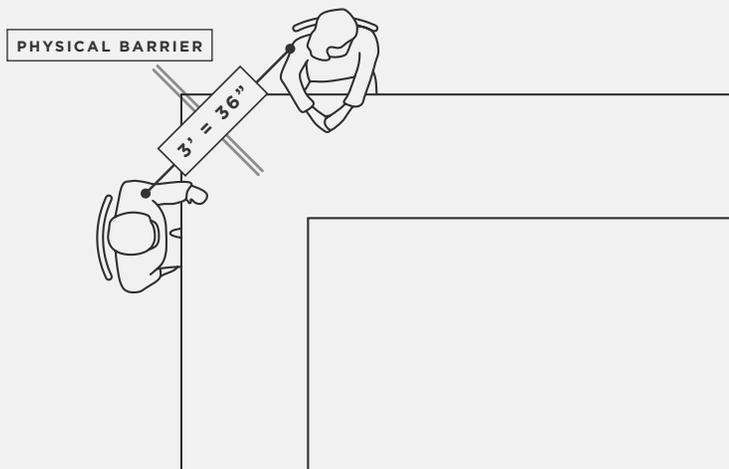
SCENARIO 11 Counter Corner (no barrier)

- 6 feet between chair centers if from different parties



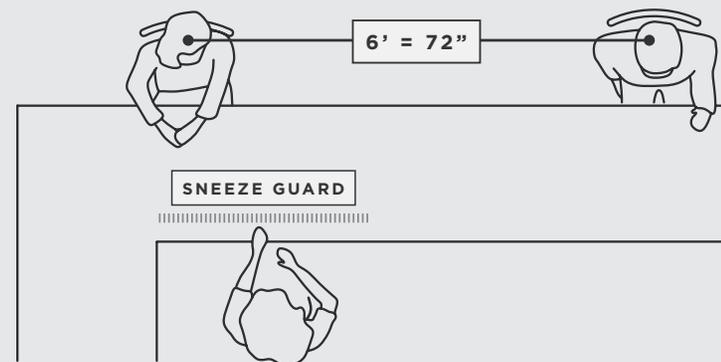
SCENARIO 12 Counter Corner (with barrier)

- 2 feet between tables, edge to edge
- Barrier must cover the entire seat depth



SCENARIO 13 Counter Seating (sneeze guard)

- When employee distance is not feasible (i.e. built in jockey station or beer taps) barrier may be used
- Barrier must extend at least 30" above counter



PICKUP + DELIVERY PROCEDURES

Restaurants that offer delivery or on-site pickup need to develop a social distancing strategy. Here are a few considerations:

- Where possible, dedicate an entirely separate pickup area for delivery staff. Stage a pickup shelf at a back entrance, at one end of the bar, or at the entrance of the restaurant with clearly marked delivery instructions.
- Mark out social distancing queuing/waiting spots on the floor so drivers and guests can stand at a safe distance while waiting for their order.
- Add a specific window of time for each pickup order to avoid a crowd waiting for orders.
- Add hand sanitizer stations and antimicrobial wipes free of charge for use before handing packaging to a guest or before guests take the package home.
- Print a card outlining your social distancing and safety and sanitation processes for guests and drivers to take.
- Clearly communicate your food handling procedures on your online channels.
- Implement tamper-resistant packaging for all delivery items.

SERVICE IN THE ERA OF SOCIAL DISTANCING

Overall, we anticipate a near-term transition to a lower-touch style of service. For many restaurants, personalized high-touch service is the very definition of their guest experience. However, COVID-19 will undoubtedly change the public's perception of what service means — specifically as it relates to interpersonal distances, the quantity and volume of personal contact, and what is safe and hygienic. This post-crisis anxiety will vary from region to region, depending on the severity of the crisis and the psychological impact that the pandemic had in each locale. Some examples of this new style of service may include:

- Altering service strategy to a less interactive model with less personal touches per table
- Mobile pre-ordering capabilities that allow guests to skip the menu and ordering process at the restaurant
- New food delivery processes, transitioning from hand-carried plates to tray or cart service for less server contact with the plates
- The elimination or transition of self-service components like buffets and salad bars
- Coverings over meal plates that are removed tableside
- Interim cash-free policies with prepay options
- Digital guest checks with tableside credit card processing
- A transition to e-receipts in lieu of paper
- Single-use menus, QR Codes Placed on the tables that link to the restaurant's menu, or digital menu tablets with anti-microbial screens
- Updated reservations processes to bring in guests at set intervals with no anticipated wait times to prevent overcrowding waiting areas

REOPENING MENU APPROACH

When reopening for service, we recommended that restaurants give serious consideration to the opening menu — not just in terms of what is available, but in terms of ensuring the highest profit margin. Generating a high profit margin may mean the difference in extending funds long enough until a full recovery takes hold and coming up short. Ensure that there are some house favorites, but do not be afraid to put items on the menu that are better margin drivers. The same is true for the beverage program. Most guests will be thrilled to see your restaurant open and will not begrudge seeing a more limited and focused menu.

When streamlining your menu for reopening consider the following:

- Create a smaller, more focused menu for ease of operations
- Feature your best-sellers to remind your guests what makes you great
- Focus only on items with high margins to help your business return to profitability
- Explore family style meals that reduce the number of table touches required for a full meal
- Conceptualize takeout options that can be reheated and assembled at home
- Think of sub recipes - sauces, dressings, sides, and marinades - as potential prepared food retail items for easy upsells for takeout



SOCIAL DISTANCE SIGNAGE

Streetsense has developed easy to use downloadable sign templates for your restaurant, bar, or retail establishment to clearly communicate social distance guidelines to your guests and employees. Contact us if you are interested!

STEPS

- 1 Determine which signs you need, what your budget is and how you will be procuring your signs
- 2 Using the templates for the signs needed, add a high-resolution version of your logo and customize any specific operating information like revised opening hours
- 3 Print on your high quality printer or work with local vendor to print your customized signs for use in your establishment
- 4 Purchase or procure adequate mounts and protection for your signs to protect them from wear and tear



SOCIAL DISTANCING

In partnership with Bethesda Up, Streetsense has prepared a quick checklist of action items to help you get prepared to open your restaurant in a new era of social distancing:

CHECKLIST

- Get an accurate seat count and sketch a diagram of your current seating plan
- Follow the social distancing guidelines to redraw a revised seating plan
- Determine your occupancy and load limits allowable by local regulations
- Draw a plan for customer entry, pickup, delivery and payment
- Draw in sanitation stations, temperature check, and queuing areas to your revised seating plan
- Design and print signage informing patrons of your revised regulations
- Write or append service training manuals and operating standards with new service requirements for social distancing
- Write a retraining schedule for your existing or returning staff



CHAPTER TWO

Safety + Sanitation

Restaurants and bars have a leg up on other establishment because safety and sanitation is a core competency required of any operator. This chapter will cover the specific ways your business can prepare for a safe relaunch that protects the health of your guests and staff.

POST-PANDEMIC SAFETY + SANITATION

As guests begin to return to restaurants and bars in the weeks and months following the crisis, they will do so with trepidation. Those who have not been infected may be wary of crowded spaces and close contact with service staff and other patrons until a vaccine or cure has been developed. In addition to social distancing measures following the crisis, all food service facilities must step up their sanitation procedures, become increasingly transparent about their activities, and overcommunicate to guests.

NOTE

Businesses must be attuned to the latest employment regulations and guidelines issued by federal, state, and local jurisdictions and agencies and act accordingly.

Daily Staff Testing

For a period of time following the reopening of many restaurants and bars, there will be a large portion of the population who have not been infected with COVID-19 and are susceptible to infection. For that reason, many restaurants have begun to screen their employees for symptoms of the virus before the start of every shift. Some employers are taking employee temperatures with touchless thermometers, and others are going through a list of possible symptoms with each employee before their shift. If an employee is sick or receives any kind of testing (virus or antibody), results should be reported to the employer and the timing of returning to work should only be with doctor's approval. Needless to say, this is a highly sensitive topic and needs to be handled with the utmost tact and fairness. While it is a good business practice to send people who exhibit obvious signs of illness home (with pay), the policy must be carefully handled and thoughtful in its execution.¹

Antibody Testing

Once antibody testing for the virus becomes widely available, encourage your employees to get tested as soon as possible. (Check with your company's insurance provider to see if these are covered or consider paying for these tests through the business.) Employees who do not test positive for the antibodies are still susceptible to infection and should be offered work in non-interactive roles, wear protective equipment, or work from home until the threat from the virus wanes to a point where it is safe to come back to work. Work with your HR team to set up tracking for these tests, and ask your employees for formal documentation of their results.

¹Smith, Allen. "During Coronavirus Outbreak, Should Employers Check Workers' Temperatures?" Society for Human Resource Management, 3 March 2020, <https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/legal-and-compliance/employment-law/pages/coronavirus-checking-temperatures.aspx>.

Sick Leave Guidelines

It is important for restaurants and bars to have clearly defined and generous sick leave guidelines for employees in the months following the lifting of the pandemic restrictions. These guidelines should financially protect your employees to such a degree that they feel comfortable staying home when they feel ill or detect any symptoms of COVID-19. Having employees try to “tough it out” when not feeling well in order to avoid the loss of pay is not healthy for your business or for the community at large.

Staff Sanitation Training

We recommend a mandatory post-pandemic training session for all staff prior to the return back to work. Clearly redefine and systematize new sanitation procedures and reinforce these new requirements on a daily basis. Encourage your teams to make this a fun process with pre-shift games, shift tracking games, small extras for compliance with new standards, etc. Establish a “before and after service” hand washing or sanitizing for all staff. Staff should wash hands between serving and clearing dishes or establish a dedicated person to clear dishes and coordinate with wait staff if a customer requests their dishes be cleared.

Receiving + Storage

Transmission of COVID-19 through food, food packaging, or even food handlers has not been identified as a large risk factor for this illness. However, evidence suggests that the virus may remain viable for hours to days on certain surfaces like glass, acrylic, stainless steel, and plastic. Implementing clearly defined and highly regulated operating procedures for the receiving and storing process will be key in controlling your product and mitigating contamination concerns.

Restrooms

Restrooms are one of the main danger areas for the spread of infection and a key indication of the sanitation of a business in general. We recommend disinfecting high-use touch points such as door handles, sink fixtures, flush handles, and dispensers every hour. Deep cleaning, including thoroughly cleaning and disinfecting every major surface and scrubbing down toilet bowls, is best done daily. Additional steps that your establishment can take to prevent the spread of the virus are outlined below:

- Place a trash can by the door if the door cannot be opened without touching the handle.
- For single restrooms, provide signage and materials (paper towels and trash cans) for individuals to use without touching the handles.
- Place signs indicating that toilet lids (if present) should be closed before flushing.
- Place signs asking customer and employees to wash hands before and after using the restroom.
- Provide paper towels in restrooms and disconnect or tape-off hand air dryers.
- Significantly ramp up efforts to keep bathrooms clean and properly disinfected.

FRONT OF HOUSE SANITATION

In addition to the previous overarching recommendations for restaurants and bars, below are some specific recommendations for the front of house operation. These actions are not only designed to help stop the continued spread of the virus, but also to give comfort and a sense of security to your guests.

High-Touch Areas

For disinfecting, focus on high-touch objects in the dining room, including door knobs, door handles and push plates, railings, light and air-control switches, faucets, and toilet flush levers. Display an hourly disinfecting schedule for all high-touch areas.

Service Stations + Tools

Spray with disinfectant hourly. Run all water pitchers, tongs, and service tools through the dish machine hourly. Carefully disinfect POS terminals, touch screens, digital menus, and pagers while taking care not to damage the electronics in the process.

Tabletops + Chairs

Before each seating, spray and wipe down both tabletops and dining chairs with disinfectant. The EPA does consider tabletops to be a food contact surface, so after table surfaces are disinfected, follow with a wash, rinse, and sanitize. Disposable towels should be used for disinfecting to eliminate the chance for cross-contamination.

Salt + Pepper, Condiment Caddies, Service Wares

Bus to kitchen between each use. Set up a “sanitized” and “not-sanitized” condiment area to sanitize and disinfect caddies and shakers between each seating. Another option is to consider individual pre-packed disposable packets for condiments until we are out of the crisis.

Bar Surfaces

Similar to tabletops and chairs above, spray and wipe down both the bartop and bar stools with disinfectant before each seating. The EPA does consider bartops to be a food contact surface, so after surfaces are disinfected, follow with a wash, rinse, and sanitize. Disposable towels should be used for disinfecting to eliminate the chance for cross-contamination.

Uniforms + “Service” Distancing

Service staff should be trained to handle every customer interaction with extra care and etiquette. Make sure that you handle training for conflicting situations properly and always designate a person within the management team to address any issues. Face masks and gloves may be the new standard uniform, especially for those carrying food or being closer than six feet from guests.

ENHANCED PRACTICES

As the virus and the public reaction to its spread has developed, additional mitigation techniques have been developed to help businesses return back to normal. Below are additional measures that can be taken to ensure the safety of your guests and employees.

Revised Cleaning Standards

Establish a new and more disciplined disinfection routine for your staff to follow - no more wet rag approach (use disposable products instead). Menus should be non-porous and disinfected between use. If paper menus are used, make them single use only. Consider alternatives like a menu board or phone app. Apron, towels, work clothing, etc. should be placed in trash bags and treated as potentially contaminated and laundered per recommendations below.

Additional Physical Barriers

When planning for a relaunch, consider the feasibility of placing plexiglass partitions between employees and customers in strategic locations (e.g., fast food windows, host stands, and bars). In areas where it is not possible to relocate furniture - booths or fixed tables - consider Plexiglass or anti-microbial curtain partitions between booths as an alternative to removing fixed furniture installations.

Waste and Laundering

For the safety and sanitation of the guests and employees, create a sealable, no-touch waste solution for single use disinfectant products and disposable personal protective equipment. Disposal of these single-use items and used disinfection materials as regular waste is allowable so long as food safety guidelines are followed. Once stored safely, used cloth materials (e.g., linens, aprons, etc.) should be washed and dried on the highest temperature setting.

Ventilation

Because the virus has the potential to be transported through the air, it is critical to have a properly functioning HVAC system. Get fresh air to the customers and staff and properly utilize ventilation system. This includes:

- Encourage outdoor dining, and open doors and windows if possible.
- Maximize fresh air (outside air %) through your existing ventilation system.
- Maintain relative humidity at 40-60%.
- Ensure restroom is under negative pressure.
- Contact your local HVAC professional for guidance.
- Clean HVAC intakes daily.
- Consider using portable HEPA filtration units.

If fans such as pedestal fans or hard mounted fans are used in the restaurant, take steps to minimize air from fans blowing from one person directly at another individual.

SANITATION + SAFETY RESOURCES

Sanitation and safety resources are constantly being updated by international and federal public health organizations and academic research authorities. Be sure to stay up to date on all of the latest guidelines and resources and ensure that your establishment is compliant with any additional state, local, and regional regulations or procedures required by your state, county, or city public health authority.

Read More:

[Center for Disease Control COVID-19 Cleaning Guidelines](#)

[World Health Organization COVID-19 Food Safety \(English\)](#)

[UC Davis COVID-19 Food Safety Resources and FAQ](#)

SAFETY + SANITATION

In partnership with Bethesda Up and utilizing the CDC and OSHA guidelines, Streetsense has prepared a quick checklist of action items to help you implement enhanced sanitation procedures to protect your staff and the general public:

CHECKLIST

- Purchase personal protective equipment and additional sanitation supplies
- Research and identify temperature testing procedures and policies
- Identify a low-cost local resource for COVID-19 testing
- Use this guide and the NYSF guidelines to write a staff sanitation training plan
- Establish sick leave policies and guidelines
- Post enhanced sanitation signage throughout your establishment
- Evaluate your HVAC system and determine if it needs to be upgraded or serviced to provide clean air to everyone in your establishment