

Health Inspection Self-Audit Checklist

Run your own unannounced inspection, score it like the health department does, and fix the misses before an inspector finds them. Built for US and Canadian restaurants.

What is inside
A monthly self-audit walkthrough, area by area, with pass/fail boxes
The critical-violation shortlist inspectors weigh most
A temperature reference card (US FDA Food Code + Canadian equivalents)
A during-the-inspection playbook for the manager on duty
A corrective-action log that turns the report into a work order
A scoring sheet to track audit results month over month

Free from Novaryq - the all-in-one restaurant platform. novaryq.com/resources

How to use this checklist

Once a month, unannounced. Pick a random day and daypart. Have a manager who did NOT set up that shift run the audit - familiarity hides problems.

Score honestly. Every item is pass or fail; there is no "mostly". If you would not want an inspector to see it, it fails.

Fix criticals the same day. Critical items (marked C) are the ones that can make people sick and the ones that fail inspections. Everything else goes on the corrective-action log with an owner and a date.

Keep the filled sheets. A binder of completed self-audits shows a pattern of active managerial control - and tells you whether the same item keeps failing.

Codes vary. US local codes are usually based on the FDA Food Code; Canadian requirements come from provincial/territorial regulation and your local health unit. Where numbers differ from the ones printed here, your local code wins. Confirm with your health department.

The critical shortlist

If you only have ten minutes today, check these eight. They drive most failed inspections:

☐	Cold holding at or below 41 F / 4 C, hot holding at or above 135 F / 60 C
☐	Handwash sinks stocked, unblocked, and used between tasks
☐	Raw proteins stored below ready-to-eat food; separate boards in use
☐	Date marking on all prepared and opened TCS food; nothing expired
☐	Sanitizer buckets and dish machine at correct concentration, test strips in use
☐	No bare-hand contact with ready-to-eat food; hair restraints on
☐	No pest evidence: droppings, gnaw marks, flies, nesting material
☐	Chemicals stored away from food and food-contact surfaces

1. Receiving and dry storage

Pass	Fail	Check
☐	☐	(C) All food stored at least 6 inches / 15 cm off the floor
☐	☐	(C) Chemicals and cleaning supplies stored completely separate from food
☐	☐	First-in-first-out rotation visible; oldest stock at the front
☐	☐	No dented, swollen, or rusted cans in use; damaged stock segregated
☐	☐	Bulk bins labelled and closed with scoops stored handle-up
☐	☐	Dry storage clean, dry, ventilated; no cardboard on the floor; no product under pipes
☐	☐	Receiving log in use: temps taken on refrigerated deliveries and recorded

Notes: _____

2. Walk-in cooler and freezers

Pass	Fail	Check
☐	☐	(C) Air temperature at or below 41 F / 4 C (cooler); freezer holding product frozen solid
☐	☐	(C) Raw meat, poultry, seafood stored below or away from ready-to-eat food, in cook-temp order (poultry lowest)
☐	☐	(C) All prepared / opened TCS food date-marked; nothing past its use-by date
☐	☐	Everything covered; nothing stored directly on shelving without a pan or wrap
☐	☐	Cooling items in shallow pans, uncovered or loosely covered, with airflow; cooling log filled in
☐	☐	Thermometer visible and accurate in every unit; temps logged at least twice daily
☐	☐	Door gaskets clean and intact; condenser not dripping on product; floors clean and dry

Notes: _____

3. Prep area

Pass	Fail	Check
☐	☐	(C) Handwash sink stocked (soap, paper towels, warm water), unblocked, used for nothing but hands
☐	☐	(C) No thawing at room temperature - under refrigeration, under cold running water, or as part of cooking
☐	☐	(C) Colour-coded or dedicated boards for raw proteins vs produce vs ready-to-eat
☐	☐	Sanitizer bucket at station, fresh, correct concentration, cloth stored in it between uses
☐	☐	In-use utensils stored correctly (in product with handle out, or in a dipper well); nothing in standing water
☐	☐	Prep-in-progress TCS food out of temperature control for the shortest practical time
☐	☐	Gloves changed between tasks; no bare-hand contact with ready-to-eat food

Notes: _____

4. Cook line

Pass	Fail	Check
☐	☐	(C) Hot-holding units at or above 135 F / 60 C; cold rail at or below 41 F / 4 C
☐	☐	(C) Probe thermometer on the line, calibrated (ice-water check), and actually used mid-rush
☐	☐	(C) Final cook temps hit: 165 F / 74 C poultry, 155 F / 71 C ground meat, 145 F / 63 C whole-muscle cuts and fish
☐	☐	Wiping cloths in sanitizer between uses, not on cutting boards or aprons
☐	☐	Hood filters degreased; no visible grease buildup above the line
☐	☐	No cross-use of tongs/utensils between raw and cooked product
☐	☐	Time-as-control items (if used) marked with discard times and actually discarded

Notes: _____

5. Dish pit and warewashing

Pass	Fail	Check
☐	☐	(C) High-temp machine reaching required final-rinse temperature, or chemical machine at correct sanitizer concentration - verified with test strip / thermolabel this audit
☐	☐	(C) Three-compartment sink set up wash / rinse / sanitize with correct concentrations when in use
☐	☐	Test strips available, dry, in date, and staff can demonstrate using them
☐	☐	Clean dishes air-dried, stored inverted, on clean shelving; no towel-drying
☐	☐	No chipped or cracked plates, glasses, or containers in circulation
☐	☐	Clean and dirty flow separated; no clean dishes stacked where spray can reach them

Notes: _____

6. Front of house and service

Pass	Fail	Check
☐	☐	(C) Ice machine interior clean; scoop stored handle-up outside the bin, never glass
☐	☐	Soda gun nozzles and holsters clean; bar floor drains clean
☐	☐	Self-serve areas sneeze-guarded, with clean utensils and single-use items protected
☐	☐	Allergen process in place and any staff member asked can describe it
☐	☐	Condiments, glassware, and rollups protected from contamination
☐	☐	Staff drinks covered, with straws, stored below and away from work surfaces

Notes: _____

7. Restrooms, staff areas and handwashing

Pass	Fail	Check
☐	☐	(C) Every handwash sink in the building stocked and functional (soap, towels or dryer, warm water)
☐	☐	Restrooms clean, stocked, ventilated; self-closing doors where required; covered waste bin where required
☐	☐	Staff belongings and phones stored away from food and prep surfaces
☐	☐	Sick-work policy posted or known: staff can say what symptoms keep them home
☐	☐	First-aid kit stocked; any cuts covered with bandage plus glove

Notes: _____

8. Exterior, waste and pest control

Pass	Fail	Check
☐	☐	(C) No pest evidence anywhere: droppings, gnaw marks, flies, egg cases, nesting material
☐	☐	Dumpster lids closed, area around it clean, no standing grease or liquid
☐	☐	Back door sealed (sweep intact, no daylight), kept closed or screened
☐	☐	Grease bin area clean; used-oil handling not tracking through the kitchen
☐	☐	Pest-control service current; reports on file and last visit within contract interval

Notes: _____

Temperature reference card

Post a copy at the line and at receiving. US figures follow the FDA Food Code; Canadian figures are the common metric equivalents used by most health units. Where your local code differs, it wins.

Check	US (FDA Food Code)	Canada (typical)
Cold holding	41 F or below	4 C or below
Hot holding	135 F or above	60 C or above
Poultry / stuffed / reheat for hot holding	165 F	74 C
Ground meat	155 F	71 C
Whole-muscle beef, pork, fish	145 F	63 C
Cooling stage 1	135 F to 70 F in 2 h	60 C to 20 C in 2 h
Cooling stage 2	70 F to 41 F in 4 more h	20 C to 4 C in 4 more h
Danger zone (minimize time in it)	41 F - 135 F	4 C - 60 C

Thermometer calibration: fill a cup with crushed ice and a little water, stir, wait one minute - a probe should read 32 F / 0 C. Adjust or replace if it is off by more than 2 F / 1 C. Do this weekly and after any drop.

During the inspection: manager-on-duty playbook

Greet and verify

Meet the inspector at the door, check credentials, and let the team know an inspection is underway. Service continues normally - pulling staff off the line to scrub looks worse than the finding it hides.

Walk with them, the whole time

One manager accompanies the inspector everywhere. You answer questions, unlock doors, and hear every observation first-hand instead of discovering it on the report.

Correct on the spot

Anything fixable in the moment - a blocked handwash sink, an unlabelled container, product in the danger zone - fix it immediately and say so. Many jurisdictions record it as corrected on site. It is still noted, but it demonstrates active managerial control.

Never argue

Not you, and not your staff. If you disagree with a finding, say you would like it noted that you disagree, and use the formal review or appeal process afterward. Arguments never remove a violation; they change the tone of every future visit.

Let staff answer honestly

Inspectors ask cooks about final cook temps and sick policies specifically to test training. Coached-sounding answers are a red flag. If staff answers are wrong, that is a training gap you fix this week - the question will come back.

Ask questions

An inspector is a free food-safety consultant. Ask what they see in other kitchens, what they would fix first, and how borderline items are scored in your jurisdiction.

Close out properly

Before they leave: get the report, walk through every item, confirm what is critical, what the deadlines are, and whether there will be a re-inspection. Sign it - signing acknowledges receipt, not agreement.

After the inspection: corrective-action log

Read the report the same day. Criticals first - they carry deadlines. Debrief the team at the next pre-shift, then log every item below. A violation is closed only when the fix is verified by someone other than the person who made it.

Violation / audit fail	Critical ?	Fix	Owner	Due	Verified by / date

Monthly self-audit score sheet

Total the fails per area each month. The pattern matters more than any single number: an area that fails two months running is a system problem, not a person problem.

Area	M1	M2	M3	M4	M5	M6
Receiving & dry storage						
Walk-in & freezers						
Prep area						
Cook line						
Dish pit						
Front of house						
Restrooms & handwash						
Exterior, waste & pests						
Critical fails (total)						
Auditor initials						

Pair this audit with the Daily line check and food safety log (temperature, cooling, receiving and corrective-action forms) - free in the Novaryq resource library at novaryq.com/resources.

This checklist is a general operational tool, not legal or regulatory advice. Requirements vary by jurisdiction; your local health department or health unit is the authority on what applies to your restaurant. Reflects publicly available guidance as of 2026.