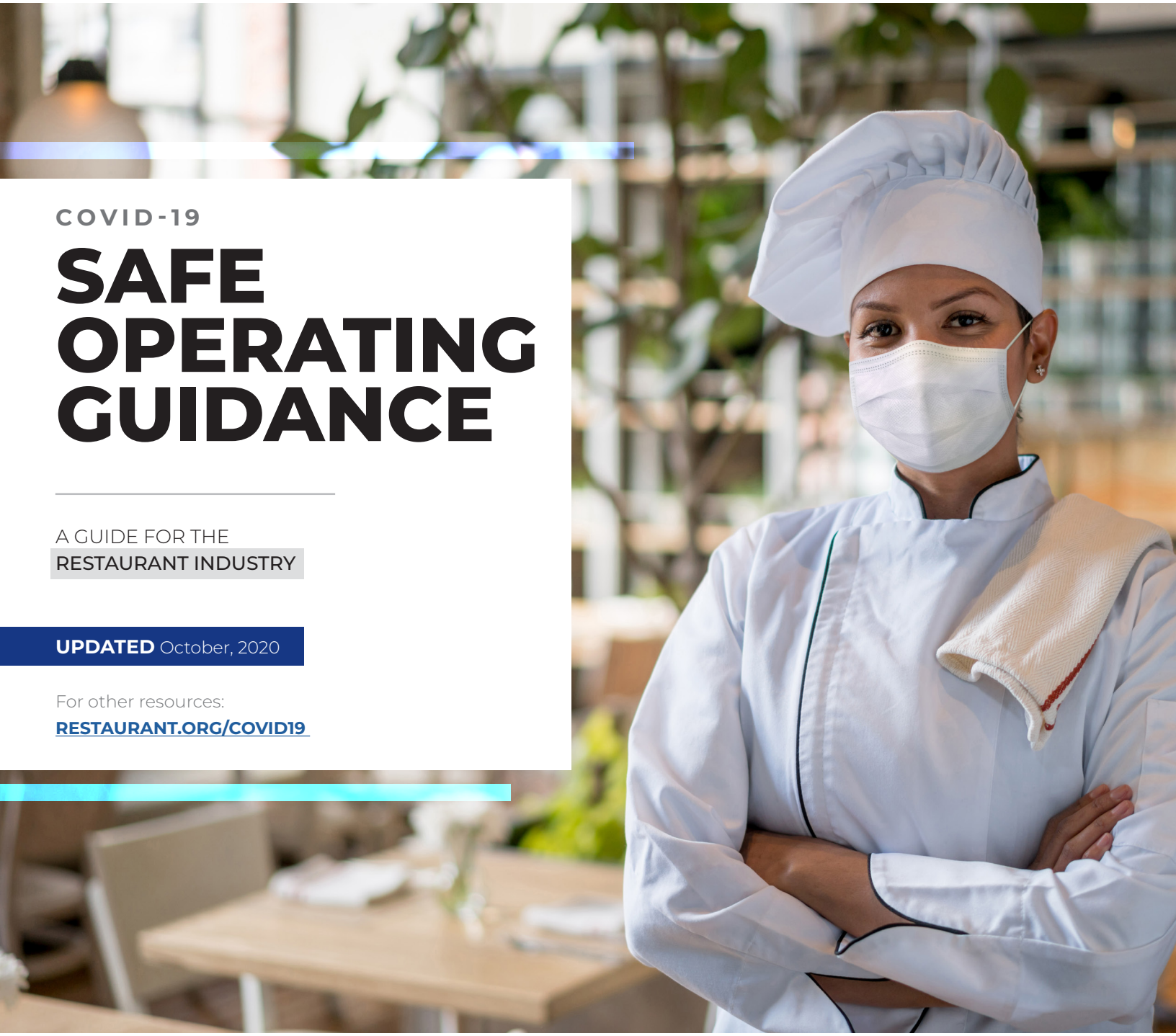
CONNECTICUT Restaurant ASSOCIATION



COVID-19

SAFE OPERATING GUIDANCE

A GUIDE FOR THE
RESTAURANT INDUSTRY

UPDATED October, 2020

For other resources:
RESTAURANT.ORG/COVID19

NATIONAL RESTAURANT ASSOCIATION®

ServSafe
National Restaurant Association™

CONNECTICUT Restaurant ASSOCIATION

TO RESTAURANT OPERATORS OPEN AND READY TO OPERATE UNDER LOCAL REQUIREMENTS...

The purpose of this updated guidance is to continue to offer you direction and provide a framework for best practices as you as you operate under new COVID-19 operating rules.

COVID-19 is a new, novel virus meaning there is more health officials are learning. Good guidance will update over time to incorporate new information as it comes in. As a restaurateur, stay flexible; COVID-19 is transmitted person to person, not through food, so make use of your Food Safety Management systems to build and maintain the infection controls that help protect against transmission.

To help you manage your food safety plan, download the U.S. Food & Drug Administration's Food Safety Checklist.

Implement and maintain requirements to wash hands after touching one's face covering, or after coughing or sneezing on a tissue.

The same applies to additional practices, such as wearing a cloth face covering, changing layouts to ensure employees and customers remain at least 6 feet apart, or limiting seating capacity to allow for proper social distancing. These measures should be observed and managed as diligently as any food safety practice.

Our latest document builds on our original guidance and reflects the most recent data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, FDA, and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration specifically related to interacting with diners.

The National Restaurant Association wishes to provide both restaurant operators and diners information about what to expect as the industry returns to on-premises dining.

These recommendations are intended to complement existing state and local regulations concerning cleaning and sanitation, personal hygiene, social distancing, and health monitoring and are meant to be used in conjunction with the FDA Food Code requirements, and all guidance the CDC, FDA, and state and local health officials are requiring as the states begin to reopen their economies.

We recognize that not everyone has access to guidance, and that is where the Association can provide help.

In addition to the recommendations above, each restaurant should, at a minimum:

- Make sure your person-in-charge has an up-to-date ServSafe Food Manager certification. The FDA requires every facility to have a person in charge on site during open hours and also directs that the person in charge should have a food manager certification.

- Provide ServSafe Food Handler training for your workers as well as COVID-19 training videos for Reopening Guidance, Delivery and Takeout. They're your front line; educating them protects them, you and your guests.

- Make technology your friend. Contactless payment systems, automated ordering systems, mobile ordering apps, website updates and simple texts can help you to communicate and conduct business with reduced need for close contact. Keep communicating with customers (your hours, menu items, reservations, etc.), and help promote your social distancing and safety efforts.

- And some of the best advice comes from the government agencies including the FDA's Best Practices for Re-Opening Retail Food Establishments During the COVID-19 Pandemic (Food Safety Checklist), FDA/OSHA Employee Health and Food Safety Checklist, and OSHA's Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19. All are designed to provide information and tools to help you operate.

As we continue to learn more about operating businesses during the COVID-19 pandemic, it's important to share with you the most current direction and advice from the experts at FDA, CDC, EPA, OSHA and other agencies. These documents will continue to reflect those best practices and will continue to be updated.

MAKE THE SERVSAFE DINING COMMITMENT

Through the ServSafe Dining Commitment, operators pledge to follow four best practices that are effective means for reducing the transmission of COVID-19.

1. Adherence to this updated COVID-19 Safe Operating Guidance and/or corporate brand guidelines, which are based on CDC, FDA, EPA and OSHA guidelines.

2. Adherence to the laws and guidelines set by their state and local municipalities.

3. Commitment to a minimum of one person per location with a current ServSafe Food Protection Manager certification.

4. Commitment to ensuring employees have been trained in ServSafe Food Handler courses and have gone through the free ServSafe COVID-19 Precaution Trainings

Restaurants ready to make the commitment can sign on at ServSafeCommit.org

SAFE RESTAURANT OPERATION

The National Restaurant Association partnered with representatives of the Food and Drug Administration, academia, the Conference for Food Protection, Ecolab, public health officials and industry representatives to develop these guidelines to help restaurants return to full operation safely as states continue to respond to the COVID-19 outbreak.

This guidance is designed to provide you with a basic summary of recommended practices that can be used to help mitigate exposure to the COVID-19 virus, including:

- Food safety
- Cleaning, sanitizing and safely disinfecting
- Employee health monitoring and personal hygiene
- Social distancing
- Effective ventilation

Combine this guidance with your existing policies as well as this new resource from the CDC, Considerations for Restaurants and Bars, and CDC's Activities and Initiatives Supporting the COVID-19 Response and the President's Plan for Opening America Up Again.

Armed with information, ServSafe training and the recommendations of your local health departments, you can help secure safe operation.

COVID-19

RESTAURANT RESPONSE

Food safety has always been a priority for the restaurant industry, for both guests and employees.

The basis of an effective food safety culture is the Food and Drug Administration Food Code, which for decades has served as the foundation for restaurant operating procedures as they relate to safe food handling. The guidance outlined in the Food Code is science-based and is designed to reduce and prevent the incidence of foodborne illness. Food Code requirements related to sanitation and personal hygiene in particular are the most reliable protocols available to combat risks related to the spread of COVID-19.

Local, state and federal regulators use the FDA Food Code as a model to develop or update their own food safety rules and to be consistent with national food regulatory policy.

AMONG THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE FOOD CODE THAT APPLY TO CORONAVIRUS MITIGATION ARE

- Prohibiting sick employees in the workplace
- Strict hand washing practices that include how and when to wash hands
- Strong procedures and practices to clean and sanitize surfaces
- Ensuring the person in charge of a foodservice facility is a certified food safety manager
- Ensuring the person in charge is on site at all times during operating hours

ServSafe National Restaurant Association

FOR MORE THAN 30 YEARS, THE NATIONAL RESTAURANT ASSOCIATION'S SERVSAFE PROGRAM HAS PROVIDED FOOD SAFETY TRAINING FOR BOTH MANAGERS AND FOOD HANDLERS.

ServSafe certifies food safety managers through an independently developed certification exam, which follows standards adopted by the Conference for Food Protection.

The Conference for Food Protection also collaborates with the FDA to develop the Food Code.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS GUIDANCE IS TO BUILD ON THE ALREADY ESTABLISHED BEST PRACTICES AND REQUIREMENTS AVAILABLE that address specific health and safety concerns related to the spread of COVID-19, and to put those protocols into practice as state and local officials continue to open communities and businesses.

Operators should make use of these guidelines as they relate to their existing policies and procedures and in conjunction with instructions they receive from authorities.

GUIDANCE FOR EMPLOYERS

Operators should update their existing policies and implement operating procedures in accordance with the latest FDA, CDC, EPA and OSHA guidance and in accordance with local and state officials regarding:

- Social distancing and protective equipment
- Employee health and personal hygiene
- Cleaning/sanitizing/disinfecting

ON FOOD SAFETY

- Discard all food items that are out of date.
- Where salad bars and buffets are permitted by local/state officials, they must have sneeze guards in place. Change, wash and disinfect utensils and containers that are handled frequently and place appropriate barriers in open areas. Alternatively, cafeteria-style service (employee served) is permissible with appropriate barriers in place, and where employees use PPE and limit close contact between guests.
- If providing a "grab and go" service, stock coolers to no more than minimum levels.
- Ensure the person in charge is ServSafe certified and that their certification is up to date, and provide food handler training to refresh food safety knowledge for employees.

GUIDANCE

FOR CLEANING AND SANITIZING

- Thoroughly clean and safely disinfect entire facility. Disinfect both high-touch points and seldom-touched surfaces in back-of-house, front-of-house and guest-service areas. If a sanitizer is used, ensure it's effective against COVID-19. Follow the manufacturers' labels and guidance to ensure products are used correctly, safely, and for their intended purposes.

- Wash and rinse food-contact surfaces, food-preparation surfaces, and beverage equipment after use. Avoid food-contact surfaces when using disinfectants. However, if use of a disinfectant is necessary due to COVID-19 exposure, the food-contact surface should be washed, rinsed and sanitized after disinfectant use and prior to reuse of the surface.

- Wherever possible, assign a staff member to work the self-service drink stations, limit guest congregation/lines, and remove lemons and unwrapped straws from self-service drink stations.

- Clean and disinfect restrooms regularly and, when possible, stock them with individual disinfectant wipes.

- Make hand sanitizer readily available to guests. Consider touchless hand sanitizing solutions.

- Avoid sharing items such as menus, condiments and food orders. Use single-use or digital menus; toss single-use menus after each use. Opt for single-use condiments. Use no-touch trash cans.

- Use contactless payment options as much as possible. Ask customers and employees to exchange cash or cards by placing them on a receipt tray or on the counter to avoid hand-to-hand contact.

- Clean and disinfect any pens, counters, or hard surfaces between use or customer.

- Use disposable foodservice items (utensils, dishes). If not feasible, ensure that all non-disposable foodservice items are handled with gloves and wash according to FDA Food Code requirements. Employees should wash their hands after removing their gloves or after directly handling used foodservice items.

- Use gloves when handling and disposing of trash, dispose of gloves immediately after and wash hands.

- Avoid using food and beverage containers or utensils brought in by customers.

- Take steps to ensure that all water systems and features (drinking fountains) are safe to use after a prolonged facility shutdown to minimize the risk of Legionnaires' disease and other diseases associated with water.

GUIDANCE

ON PREPARING WORKPLACES FOR COVID-19

Layouts

Consider modifying layouts, adding physical barriers and procedures for social distancing (sneeze guards and partitions, particularly in areas where it's difficult for individuals to remain apart), and physical guides (including tape on floors or sidewalks, and signage)

Ventilation

The question of air circulation and aerosol transmission of the virus is still being studied. While the issue has yet to be settled to-date, the American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE) recommends that every restaurant follow these steps to maintain good restaurant ventilation:

1. Make sure you have regular HVAC preventative maintenance inspections and complete needed repairs.

2. Conduct a test & balance of the restaurant's ventilation system every 3-5 years and adjust and repair as needed.

3. Verify that the make-up air unit is operating properly (if one is used).

4. Verify that a rooftop unit's (RTU) outdoor air economizers and dampers are operating properly.

5. Verify that RTU filters, coils, drain pans, and fan blades are clean and in good working order.

6. Verify that the RTU fans are in "ON" mode and operating during all operating hours.

7. Verify that the restaurant temperature, humidity, and other RTU settings are appropriate to avoid high humidity and condensation indoors.

8. If there are questions about the HVAC system, its operation, and/or the restaurant's air balance, engage a trained professional.

Note that, as we learn more about the role air circulation plays in COVID-19 transmission we might see specific requirements for additional controls, such as specific types of filters or air disinfection systems. However, no additional control will be effective if the steps above are not followed.

GUIDANCE

ON MONITORING EMPLOYEE HEALTH & PERSONAL HYGIENE

- Per existing FDA Food Code requirements, employees who are sick should remain at home.

- If an employee becomes ill or presents signs of illness, identify the signs during a pre-work screening and send the employee home. Follow the business's and/or local health department's established policies on when the employee is allowed to return to work. While CDC guidelines advise isolating for seven days from the onset, and being symptom-free for three days without medication, employers can advise employees to consult with a doctor to determine when it's safe to return.

- Taking employees' temperatures is at the operators' discretion. The CDC has not mandated the practice and any operator who chooses to do so should engage health officials first and adopt policies aligned with proper procedures. CDC guidance states the minimum temperature that indicates a fever is 100.4°F.

- Immediately notify local health officials, staff, and customers (if possible) of any possible case of COVID-19, but maintain confidentiality that's consistent with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and other applicable federal and state privacy laws.

- Close off areas used by a sick person and do not use until the areas have been cleaned, sanitized and, in non-food-contact areas, disinfected. Try to wait 24 hours before you clean, sanitize and disinfect, or for as long as possible within 24 hours. Ensure safe and correct use and storage of disinfectants.

- Per CDC recommendations, face coverings have been shown to be effective tools to mitigate risk from individuals who show symptoms as well as those who don't, especially in close environments where it's hard for people to maintain a 3- to 6-foot distance. In some states and local jurisdictions, face coverings are required by government officials; some employers require them, too. In all cases, those coverings worn by employees should be kept clean in accordance with CDC guidance.

- Train employees on the importance of frequent hand washing, the use of hand sanitizers with at least 60% alcohol content and teach them to avoid touching their faces, whether gloved or bare handed. Wearing gloves front-of-house is discouraged and should not replace frequent hand washing and sanitizing. If required to use gloves, employees should be taught how to put gloves on and take them off properly after each service and wash their hands.

- Ensure adequate supplies to support healthy hygiene practices for both employees and customers including soap, hand sanitizer (on every table, if supplies allow), paper towels, and tissues.

- Post signs on "How to Stop the Spread of COVID-19", "ServSafe Poster: 101 Hand Washing", "Promote Everyday Protective Measures", and "Properly Wear a Face Covering".

COVID-19 EXPOSED EMPLOYEE

If you are informed that an employee has been in close contact with a person diagnosed with COVID-19, evaluate the context and quality of the interaction. Consider asking them to stay home and self-monitor for symptoms. Certain restaurant workers — including those at restaurants offering carry-out or delivery — may refer to CDC Guidance for Critical Infrastructure Workers.

- Close contact is presently defined by CDC as contact for 15 minutes or more within 6 feet over two days before illness onset (or, for asymptomatic individuals, two days prior to a positive test).

- CDC advises that critical infrastructure workers may be permitted to continue work following potential exposure to COVID-19, provided they remain asymptomatic and additional precautions are implemented to protect them and the community.

- Additional precautions include pre-screening (with temperature checks) prior to each shift, self-monitoring for symptoms, wearing a face mask for 14 days after exposure, and social distancing as work duties permit.

- Workspaces, bathrooms, common areas, and shared electronic equipment should be routinely disinfected.

- Check with local health departments to confirm guidelines.

GUIDANCE

ON SOCIAL DISTANCING

- Update floor plans for common dining areas, redesigning seating arrangements to ensure at least 6 feet of separation between table setups. Limit party size at tables to no more than the established "maximums approved" as recommended by CDC or approved by local and state government. Where practical (booths, host stands, register counters), physical barriers and partitions are acceptable. Consider a reservations-only business model or call-ahead seating to better space diners.

- Provide physical guides, such as tape on floors or sidewalks to ensure that customers remain at least 6 feet apart in lines or ask customers to wait in their cars or away from the establishment while waiting to dine or pick up food. Post signs to inform customers of food pickup and waiting protocols.

- Any social distancing measures based on square footage should take into account service areas as well as guest areas.

- Remind third-party delivery drivers and any suppliers that you have internal distancing requirements.

- Post signage at the entrance that states that no one with a fever or symptoms of COVID-19 is to be permitted in the restaurant.

- Limit contact between waitstaff and guests. Where face coverings are not mandated, consider requiring waitstaff to wear face coverings (as recommended by the CDC) if they have direct contact with guests.

- Encourage guests to wear face coverings everywhere on premises except when eating and drinking, especially when they have contact with restaurant staff. Post this request on your website and on restaurant signage.

- Guests' acceptance of mask-wearing in public spaces varies, and your employees may find themselves in tense situations when trying to convey your restaurant's mask policy. Some situations escalate unpleasantly. The Association's free training video, ServSafe Conflict De-escalation: COVID-19 Precautions, can help them handle these situations.

- Use technology solutions where possible to reduce person-to-person interaction: mobile ordering and menu tablets; text on arrival for seating; contactless payment options.

- Consider options for dine-in customers to order ahead of time to limit the amount of time spent in the establishment.

- Provide hand sanitizer for guests to use, including contactless hand sanitizing stations, and post signs reminding guests about social distancing. Thank them for their patience as you work to ensure their safety.

- Try not to allow guests to congregate in waiting areas or bar areas. Design a process to ensure guests stay separate while waiting to be seated. The process can include floor markings, outdoor distancing, waiting in cars, etc. Consider an exit from the facility separate from the entrance. Determine ingress/egress to and from restrooms to establish paths that mitigate proximity for guests and staff.

- Where possible, workstations should be staggered so employees avoid standing directly opposite one another or next to each other. Where 6 feet of separation is not possible, consider other options (e.g., face coverings) and increase the frequency of surface cleaning and sanitizing.

- Limit the number of employees allowed simultaneously in break rooms.

- Train all employees in the above safety actions while maintaining social distancing and use of face coverings during training. With larger staffs, use communication boards or digital messaging to convey pre-shift meeting information.

U.S. FOOD & DRUG ADMINISTRATION

BEST PRACTICES

FOR RETAIL FOOD ESTABLISHMENTS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC FOOD SAFETY CHECKLIST

FDA is providing a food safety checklist for previously closed retail food establishments or those that have been open with limited service related to the COVID-19 pandemic. This checklist addresses key food safety practices for retail food establishments to consider as they return to on-premises dining.

This addresses key considerations for how foods offered can be safely handled and delivered to the public. This is not a comprehensive list. FDA encourages consulting the references and links provided below (by CDC, FDA, EPA, and OSHA) for more detailed information. This will be updated as FDA receives further information and inquiries.

- Managing Employee Health (Including Contracted Workers)
- Personal Hygiene for Employees
- Managing Operations in a Foodservice Establishment or Retail Food Store
- Managing Food Pick-Up and Delivery

BE HEALTHY, BE CLEAN

- Employees - Stay home or leave work if sick; consult doctor if sick, and contact supervisor
- Employers - Instruct sick employees to stay home and send home immediately if sick
- Employers - Pre-screen employees exposed to COVID-19 for temperature and other symptoms

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds
- If soap and water are not available, use a 60% alcohol-based hand sanitizer per CDC
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands
- Wear mask/face covering per CDC & FDA

- Never touch Ready-to-Eat foods with bare hands
- Use single service gloves, deli tissue, or suitable utensils
- Wrap food containers to prevent cross contamination
- Follow 4 steps to food safety Clean, Separate, Cook, and Chill

CLEAN & DISINFECT

- Train employees on cleaning and disinfecting procedures, and protective measures, per CDC and FDA
- Have and use cleaning products and supplies
- Follow protective measures

- Disinfect high-touch surfaces frequently
- Use EPA-registered disinfectant
- Ensure food containers and utensils are cleaned and sanitized

- Prepare and use sanitizers according to label instructions
- Offer sanitizers and wipes to customers to clean grocery cart/basket handles, or utilize store personnel to conduct cleaning/sanitizing

SOCIAL DISTANCE

- Help educate employees and customers on importance of social distancing:
  - Signs
  - Audio messages
  - Consider using every other check-out lane to aid in distancing

- Avoid displays that may result in customer gatherings; discontinue self-serve buffets and salad bars; discourage employee gatherings
- Place floor markings and signs to encourage social distancing

- Shorten customer time in store by encouraging them to:
  - Use shopping lists
  - Order ahead of time, if offered
- Set up designated pick-up areas inside or outside retail establishments

PICK-UP & DELIVERY

- If offering delivery options:
  - Ensure coolers and transport containers are cleaned and sanitized
  - Maintain time and temperature controls
  - Avoid cross contamination; for example, wrap food during transport

- Encourage customers to use "no touch" deliveries
- Notify customers as the delivery is arriving by text message or phone call

- Establish designated pick-up zones for customers
- Offer curb-side pick-up
- Practice social distancing by offering to place orders in vehicle trunks

NATIONAL RESTAURANT ASSOCIATION

ServSafe National Restaurant Association

COVID-19

SAFE OPERATING GUIDANCE

A GUIDE FOR THE
RESTAURANT INDUSTRY

For other resources:
RESTAURANT.ORG/COVID19

CONNECTICUT Restaurant ASSOCIATION

WWW.CTRESTAURANT.ORG