

A PRACTICAL GUIDE

The Food Truck Launch Checklist

A step-by-step guide to opening your food truck legally, efficiently, and profitably

Made by the Braxis machine

braxisai.com

What this is

This guide is for first-time food truck owners.

It is a practical method, not a promise of a result. It contains no invented statistics, no fake customers, and no guarantees. The words were drafted with AI assistance.

Use the checklist at the end on a real piece of work this week.

Permits and Legal Requirements

Start by identifying the permits required in your city or county. Common permits include a food service permit, health department approval, and a mobile food facility permit. Check your local government's website for specific requirements, as rules vary by location. You'll also need to register your business name and obtain an Employer Identification Number (EIN) from the IRS if you plan to hire employees. Some cities require a parking permit or special event permits if you plan to operate at farmers' markets or festivals. Keep copies of all permits in a secure, easily accessible location. If unsure, consult a local small business attorney or the city's business licensing office for guidance. Avoid fines or shutdowns by verifying compliance before opening.

Finding a Commissary Kitchen

A commissary kitchen is a shared commercial kitchen where you can prepare and store food legally without a full commercial kitchen of your own. Research local commissary options, as they are often required by health departments for mobile food vendors. When choosing one, consider factors like cost, location, hours of operation, and whether they offer storage or equipment rental. Visit potential commissaries in person to assess cleanliness, staff friendliness, and whether they can accommodate your food truck's needs. Confirm that the commissary is approved by your local health department. Negotiate a contract that includes storage fees, prep time, and any additional services like dishwashing. Avoid overcommitting to a commissary that doesn't fit your schedule or budget.

Menu Costing and Pricing

Calculate the cost of each ingredient for every dish on your menu. Track the price of raw ingredients, labor, and overhead costs like fuel, permits, and commissary fees. Use a simple formula: $(\text{Cost of Ingredients} + \text{Labor Cost} + \text{Overhead}) \div \text{Portion Size} = \text{Cost per Serving}$. Add a profit margin (typically 30-50%) to determine your selling price. Test prices with a small group of customers to gauge demand and adjust as needed. Avoid underpricing, as it can lead to losses, but don't overprice either, as it may deter customers. Consider offering a few signature items to simplify inventory management and marketing. Regularly review ingredient costs and adjust prices if necessary to maintain profitability.

First-Month Operating Checklist

Before your grand opening, create a detailed checklist to ensure nothing is overlooked. Include tasks like finalizing permits, setting up payment processing (cash register, card reader, or mobile app), and purchasing initial supplies like utensils, napkins, and condiments. Test your equipment (grill, fryer, refrigeration, etc.) to ensure it's in working order. Plan your first-week schedule, including operating hours, locations, and any special events. Stock your commissary kitchen with enough ingredients for at least a week. Prepare marketing materials, such as flyers, social media posts, and a simple website or Google My Business listing. On opening day, arrive early to set up, greet customers, and troubleshoot any issues. Keep a log of daily sales, expenses, and customer feedback to refine your operations.

Marketing and Customer Engagement

Build buzz before opening by creating social media profiles (Instagram, Facebook, TikTok) and posting high-quality photos of your food, behind-the-scenes content, and promotions. Partner with local influencers or food bloggers for reviews or shoutouts. Offer a grand opening discount or free item to attract customers. Use signage, flyers, and local business networks to spread the word. Encourage repeat customers by offering loyalty discounts or a simple punch card. Collect email addresses for newsletters or text updates about promotions and events. Engage with customers on social media by responding to comments and reviews. Track which marketing efforts bring the most customers to refine your strategy. Consistency in branding and quality will help build a loyal following.

Checklist

- ☐ Verify all required permits and licenses are obtained and stored securely
- ☐ Secure a commissary kitchen and sign a contract outlining fees and services
- ☐ Calculate ingredient costs, labor, and overhead for each menu item and set competitive prices
- ☐ Test all equipment and finalize first-week operating locations and hours
- ☐ Create marketing materials (social media, flyers, website) and gather customer contact info for promotions

Where this came from

This guide is a digital product from Braxis AI. The machine wrote it with AI assistance. It contains no invented statistics, no fake customers, and no guarantees. The PDF is delivered immediately after checkout. If something is wrong, email braxisai@gmail.com and it will be fixed.

braxisai.com