A PRACTICAL GUIDE

The Restaurant Prep List Playbook

A practical guide to organizing prep, par, waste, and shift handoffs in small kitchens

Made by the Braxis machine

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ABOUT THIS GUIDE

What this is

This guide is for independent restaurant kitchens.

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.

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Define Your Prep Standards

Start by identifying what ‘prep’ means for your kitchen. Prep includes chopping, marinating, portioning, and assembling ingredients for upcoming service. Write down the minimum prep required for each menu item—this is your baseline. For example, if a dish requires 500g of onions for a 100-cover night, prep 550g to account for waste. Use a simple chart to list every menu item, its prep requirements, and the time needed. This chart becomes your prep checklist. Assign prep tasks to staff based on skill level and efficiency. For instance, tasks like peeling potatoes or washing greens can be done by line cooks, while more complex prep like sauces or garnishes should be handled by chefs. This ensures consistency and reduces last-minute stress.

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Implement a Par Stock System

A par stock system ensures you always have the right amount of ingredients on hand. Begin by calculating the par level for each ingredient—this is the minimum stock needed to avoid running out during service. For example, if you use 2kg of flour per week, your par level might be 4kg to cover two days of service. Label storage areas clearly and keep an inventory log. Use a whiteboard or digital tool to track stock levels daily. When an ingredient drops below par, add it to your weekly shopping list. This system prevents over-ordering and reduces food waste. Train your staff to check inventory at the start and end of each shift to maintain accuracy.

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Track Waste and Adjust Prep

Waste is inevitable, but tracking it helps you reduce it over time. Assign a staff member to log waste daily—record the amount and type of food discarded, along with the reason (e.g., spoilage, over-prep, or customer returns). Review this data weekly to identify trends. For instance, if you frequently waste herbs, consider buying them fresher or in smaller quantities. Adjust your prep lists based on these insights. If a dish consistently has leftover ingredients, reduce the amount prepped for that item. This not only cuts costs but also improves efficiency. Share waste reports with your team to foster accountability and encourage better prep practices.

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Streamline Shift Handoffs

Clear shift handoffs prevent confusion and ensure smooth operations. Create a standardized handoff form or checklist that includes key details like remaining prep tasks, open orders, inventory levels, and any issues from the previous shift. Use a whiteboard or digital app to update this information in real time. During handoff, walk through the form together—this ensures the incoming staff knows what’s expected. For example, if the night shift prepped extra garnishes, the day shift should know to use them before they expire. Include a section for notes, such as special requests or last-minute changes. This practice reduces errors and keeps everyone aligned.

Test and Refine Your System

No system is perfect—test yours for a few weeks and refine it based on feedback and results. Gather input from your staff during daily stand-ups or end-of-shift debriefs. Ask questions like, ‘What’s working well?’ and ‘What’s causing delays?’ Use this feedback to tweak your prep lists, par levels, or handoff process. For example, if staff consistently struggle with timing during prep, adjust the schedule to allow more buffer time. Continuously monitor waste and prep efficiency to spot areas for improvement. Small adjustments can lead to big gains in productivity and cost savings. Encourage your team to suggest changes—collaboration makes the system stronger.

USE THIS

Checklist

- [ ] Create a prep checklist for every menu item, including quantities and time estimates.
- [ ] Set par stock levels for all ingredients and update inventory daily.
- [ ] Log food waste daily, analyze trends weekly, and adjust prep lists accordingly.
- [ ] Develop a standardized shift handoff form to share key details between shifts.
- [ ] Conduct weekly reviews with staff to refine the system based on feedback and data.

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.

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