

[RESTAURANT NAME]

Restaurant Operations & Service Playbook

SAMPLE — Section 3: Food Prep & Recipe Standards

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ABOUT THIS SAMPLE

This is Section ¹ — Food Prep & Recipe Standards — from a complete Restaurant Operations & Service Playbook by Final Approach Solutions, customized specifically for your restaurant. The full playbook also covers: Our Service Philosophy, Kitchen & Front of House Communication, Food Prep & Recipe Standards, Table Service Flow, Handling Guest Complaints, Shift Management & Handoffs, Health & Safety Standards, and Escalation Protocols.

Every section is customized to your restaurant's menu, team structure, and service style — delivered as a ready-to-use Word document.

Section 3: Food Prep & Recipe Standards

Consistency is the foundation of a great restaurant. Guests return because they trust that the dish they loved last Tuesday will taste exactly the same this Saturday — regardless of who is in the kitchen. This section establishes the standards that make consistency possible.

These are not suggestions. They are the baseline every kitchen team member is expected to follow on every shift, every service.

3.1 Why Standards Matter

Every time a dish leaves this kitchen inconsistently — wrong portion, wrong temperature, wrong presentation — it costs us. It costs us in food sent back, in comped meals, in bad reviews, and in guests who do not return. The standards in this section exist to prevent all of that.

The Final Approach Standard

Every dish that leaves this kitchen must look, taste, and be portioned identically to the recipe card — every time, for every guest, on every shift. If you are unsure, ask before the plate goes out. A question takes 10 seconds. A food return takes 10 minutes and costs us a guest.

Recipe Card Rules — Non-Negotiable

¹.2 Recipe Card Protocol

Every dish on the menu has a recipe card. Recipe cards are the single source of truth for ingredients, measurements, preparation steps, and plating standards.

- ✓ Recipe cards are posted at every prep station and must be followed exactly — no improvisation
- ✓ Measurements are always weighed or measured — never eyeballed
- ✓ Substitutions or modifications require manager approval before service
- ✓ If an ingredient is unavailable, notify the manager immediately — do not substitute without approval
- ✓ Recipe cards are reviewed and updated at the start of each season — check for the current version
- ✓ New staff must demonstrate recipe accuracy before working an unsupervised station

3.3 Sample Recipe Cards

The following are examples of the recipe card format used for all menu items. Your full playbook will include a card for every dish on your menu, customized to your kitchen and portion standards.

Pan-Seared Salmon with Lemon Butter Sauce <i>Prep: 18 minutes · Serves: 1 portion</i>	
INGREDIENTS · 6 oz salmon fillet (skin on) · 1 tbsp olive oil · 2 tbsp unsalted butter · 1 clove garlic, minced · 1 lemon — zested and juiced · 2 sprigs fresh thyme · Salt and white pepper to taste · 4 oz seasonal vegetables (prepped) · 3 oz starch of the day (prepped)	PREPARATION STEPS 1. Pat salmon dry. Season flesh side with salt and white pepper. 2. Heat olive oil in pan over medium-high until shimmering. 3. Place salmon skin-side up. Sear 4 min until golden crust forms. 4. Flip. Add butter, garlic, and thyme. Baste continuously for 3–4 min. 5. Squeeze half lemon over fillet in final 30 seconds. 6. Rest 1 minute off heat before plating. 7. Plate starch at 6 o'clock, vegetables at 10 o'clock, salmon centered. 8. Spoon butter sauce over salmon. Finish with lemon zest.
PLATING STANDARD <i>Salmon centered on plate, skin side up. Sauce spooned over — not pooled. Lemon zest garnish. Plate must be clean at the rim before leaving the pass.</i>	

Classic Caesar Salad	
Prep: 8 minutes · Serves: 1 portion	
INGREDIENTS · 4 oz romaine hearts — hand-torn · 1.5 oz house Caesar dressing · 0.5 oz shaved Parmesan · 3 house-made croutons · Fresh cracked black pepper · Lemon wedge (garnish)	PREPARATION STEPS 1. Chill salad bowl for minimum 5 minutes before plating. 2. Tear romaine into 2–3 inch pieces — never cut with a knife. 3. Toss romaine with dressing until every leaf is lightly coated.
	4. Transfer to chilled bowl — do not press or compact the leaves. 5. Top with shaved Parmesan, then croutons. 6. Finish with fresh cracked pepper. Place lemon wedge at side. 7. Serve immediately — never let sit more than 2 minutes before delivery.
PLATING STANDARD <i>Leaves stacked naturally — not flat. Parmesan visible on top. Three croutons placed, not scattered. Lemon wedge at 4 o'clock. No dressing pooling at the base.</i>	

3.4 Portion Standards

Inconsistent portions are one of the most common — and most costly — errors in a kitchen. They affect food cost, guest perception, and fairness across the dining room. Every protein, starch, and sauce is weighed or measured. No exceptions.

Proteins	Weighed raw on a calibrated scale — see portion chart posted at protein station
Starches & Sides	Measured by volume using designated portioning scoops — marked by color
Sauces & Dressings	Measured by weight or ladle — ladle sizes posted at each sauce station
Garnishes	Standardized counts listed on each recipe card — not estimated

Desserts	Pre-portioned during prep — confirm count matches recipe card before service
Bread & Sides	Per-table standard posted at bread station — do not over or under-send

Scale Calibration

All kitchen scales must be zeroed and verified at the start of every shift. If a scale reads incorrectly, tag it out of service and notify the kitchen manager immediately. Never use an uncalibrated scale.

3.5 Temperature Standards

Food temperature is both a quality and a safety issue. Every protein leaving the kitchen must be verified before it reaches the pass.

Beef — Rare	125°F internal — bright red center
Beef — Medium Rare	135°F internal — warm red center
Beef — Medium	145°F internal — warm pink center
Beef — Well Done	160°F+ internal — no pink
Poultry	165°F internal — always, no exceptions
Pork	145°F internal with 3-minute rest
Fish & Seafood	145°F internal — flesh opaque and flakes easily
Hot dishes to table	Minimum 140°F at time of delivery to guest
Cold dishes to table	Maximum 40°F at time of delivery to guest

Temperature checks are not optional. Every protein. Every service. A thermometer is at every station.

3.6 Allergen Awareness at the Prep Stage

Allergen cross-contamination at the prep stage is a health and legal liability. These rules are absolute.

Allergen Prep Rules
✓ All allergen modifications are flagged on the ticket in RED before reaching the prep station
✓ Dedicated allergen prep boards and utensils are used — never shared with standard prep
✓ Allergen-free dishes are prepared first, before any standard dishes on the same ticket
✓ Every allergen modification is verbally confirmed by the expeditor before the dish is plated
✓ When in doubt — stop. Do not send a dish you are not certain is allergen-safe. Alert the manager.

No modification request is too small to take seriously. One mistake has consequences no menu item is worth.

3.7 The Pass Standard

Every dish is inspected at the pass before it leaves the kitchen. The expeditor is the last line of quality control between the kitchen and the guest.

Pass Checklist — Every Dish, Every Time
✓ Correct dish for the ticket — confirm before calling away
✓ Portion size matches recipe card standard
✓ Temperature verified — hot dishes hot, cold dishes cold
✓ Plating matches recipe card presentation
✓ Plate rim clean — no drips, smears, or fingerprints
✓ Allergen modifications confirmed and flagged on ticket
✓ Garnish present and correct per recipe card

✓ Dish ready to travel — sauces secured, nothing unstable

This is a sample from a complete Restaurant Operations & Service Playbook by Final Approach Solutions.

Interested in the full version? Contact Final Approach Solutions at fasolutionsoffice@gmail.com