

Catering License Checklist: How to Get Licensed in 6 Steps

Use this checklist as a guide to keep track of what you need before, during, and after applying for your catering license. Write your own reminders and unique requirements for your area in the blank spaces under each section.

1. Register Your Business	
Choose a business structure (LLC, corporation, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Apply for an employer identification number (EIN)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Register your business name or DBA	<input type="checkbox"/>
Apply for your local business license	<input type="checkbox"/>
Obtain a sales tax permit (if required in your state)	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>

 **Pro Tip:** Keep all of your registration documents together — you'll need them for your catering license application.

2. Get Food Safety Certified	
Complete a food handler's permit course (for all staff who handle food)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Complete a food manager certification course (for you/any supervisors)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Verify your course is state-approved	<input type="checkbox"/>
Keep printed and digital copies of all certificates	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>

 **Pro Tip:** Many states require at least one certified food manager on-site during all events.

3. Prepare Your Kitchen



Home Kitchen (If Allowed)

Confirm your state allows home-based catering (check cottage food laws)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Keep pets and family members out during food prep	<input type="checkbox"/>
Use separate storage for business ingredients and home food items	<input type="checkbox"/>
Install or designate a handwashing sink	<input type="checkbox"/>
Know your state's labelling laws	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>

Commercial Kitchen

Find a licensed commercial kitchen or commissary to rent	<input type="checkbox"/>
Verify the kitchen has passed recent health inspections and carries a valid permit	<input type="checkbox"/>
Confirm ventilation, proper number of sinks, and commercial-grade equipment	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ensure the kitchen has valid general liability insurance	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>

 **Pro Tip:** Using a licensed and insured commissary kitchen can speed up your catering license approval process.

4. Get Insured



Purchase general liability insurance (\$1,000,000 occurrence and \$2,000,000 aggregate recommended)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Include additional coverages as needed (tools and equipment, workers compensation, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>

Download your Certificate of Insurance (COI) after purchase	<input type="checkbox"/>
Include a copy of your COI with your catering license application	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>

💡 Pro Tip: FLIP makes it easy to get your COI immediately after purchase. Get **catering insurance** online today!

5. Apply for Your Catering License	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Gather all required documents (typically: menu and food prep info, home kitchen permit or commercial kitchen agreement, food safety certificates, COI, and business registration info)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Submit your application to the correct authority (often your local health department or environmental services office)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Complete plan review (conducted by the agency)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Schedule and pass your health inspection	<input type="checkbox"/>
Keep digital and physical copies of your license	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>

💡 Pro Tip: The typical processing time is 3–8 weeks, depending on where you live.

6. Renew and Maintain	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Track your license expiration (usually every 1–2 years)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Set reminders to renew at least 30 days before expiration	<input type="checkbox"/>
Keep your insurance policy active by renewing annually	<input type="checkbox"/>

Renew your/your employees' food safety certifications as required	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>

 **Pro Tip:** Add renewal dates to your digital calendar and set reminders to avoid lapses.

Quick Reference

- License cost: \$100–\$1,000 (varies by state/county/city)
 - Processing time: 3–8 weeks
- Main agencies: local health or environmental services

Top Mistakes to Avoid

- ✖ Applying before securing an approved kitchen
- ✖ Missing documents (COI, menu, food safety certificates)
 - ✖ Using a home kitchen illegally