



Asociación de Restaurantes de Puerto Rico

**OUR COMMITMENT  
TO THE RESTAURANT  
INDUSTRY OF  
PUERTO RICO**

# PURPOSE AND EXTENSION

*The purpose of this support guidebook is to offer re-opening restaurants proper follow-up instructions in order to implement the best procedures during this transition process.*

We are aware that no restaurant is alike and not every re-opening scenario will be the same. We have decided to create this document to outline **OUR COMMITMENT** during the global emergency that is the COVID-19 pandemic, to facilitate a tool for our industry during this time. In general terms, we recommend restaurant owners to:

- Make sure that the chief administrative employee update with their **ServSafe Food Manager Certification**, as the **Food and Drug Administration (FDA)** requires them.
- Make sure their employees in food-handling and processing have updated their management and health certification. Teach employees not only to protect themselves, but the customers as well.
- Make technology their friend. Try to implement payment methods that do not require contact. Automatic systems to order, mobile apps, updated webpages and texting services are key measures that will help promote the restaurant with minimum physical contact. As operations continue to slowly re-open, continue your business through online methods to comply with social distancing standards.

This guide summarizes strict health code parameters and published articles that apply to the restaurant industry, as well as any other legislative or government measure that may proceed. Our guidelines follow the **Food and Drug Administration's (FDA's) Federal Food Code**, and the **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC's)** and the **"Protocol for Establishments that Prepare and Serve Food"** from the **Department of Health**.

We find ourselves leading an unprecedented situation in Puerto Rico. This document will continue to update as well, as soon as government agencies publish more applicable guidelines for the restaurant industries. The measures included in this booklet are an adaptation to measures published by the **National Restaurant Association in the United States (NRA)** on April 22, 2020. ASORE is an NRA affiliate.



# THE GUIDEBOOK'S CONTENT SUMMARY

This document is designed to provide a compendium of all measures organizations highly encourage citizens to implement in rudimentary practices, to mitigate COVID-19 exposure and infection, including: Food management security, cleaning and sanitation, and monitoring employee's health, personal hygiene and social distancing. It is recommended restaurants educate themselves with the FDA's new guidelines about Better Practices for the food industry during the COVID-19 pandemic.

## WHAT IS OUR COMMITMENT?

Restaurant owners and operators across Puerto Rico allied with ASORE will follow a series of agreements with their employees and clients, obtaining the endorsement of **OUR COMMITMENT** during the recovery period from COVID-19. When their clients notice our endorsement, they will have the security that the restaurant is taking the necessary precautions to protect them alongside their staff and community. **OUR COMMITMENT** also empowers clients to learn what can and cannot be done in order to keep everyone healthy. We trust that the team effort between restaurants and clients will allow the industry to succeed like never before. For more information, visit: <http://asorepr.com/nuestrocompromiso>

## WHO CAN PARTICIPATE IN OUR COMMITMENT?

Every restaurant re-opening their kitchens for service.



# RESTAURANT RESPONSIBILITIES

## HOW CAN RESTAURANTS INTERESTED IN OUR COMMITMENT PARTICIPATE?

Restaurants must commit to follow and implement the best practices to protect their employees and clients, in accordance to their operations.

### GENERAL MEASURES:

- ✔ Continue leading sanitary practices required by the Health Department of Puerto Rico, including the specific protocol for COVID-19. You may access the Health Department's protocol for food establishments [here \(Document in Spanish\)](#).
- ✔ Our on-call supervisors and managers will be certified for safe food management.
- ✔ We will clean and disinfect the restaurant's common areas regularly. Tables and chairs shall be cleaned and disinfected consistently after each use.
- ✔ We will monitor our employees' general health, excusing absent shifts for those who have fallen ill.
- ✔ The option to sit and eat meals, in and outside the restaurant, will comply with the social distancing measures recommended by government organizations.
- ✔ We will post **OUR COMMITMENT** in our restaurant entrances so every passing individual understands the steps we must take to maintain our communities sanitized.



# BEST RECOMMENDED PRACTICES

## SAVE FOOD MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

It is important to remember that, due to disposed local and federal laws, restaurants are default experts in safe food management and sanitation, so many regular cleaning practices will help to comply with the underlined agreements in **OUR COMMITMENT**. We believe that if we comply with the additional safety measures established by the government to combat COVID-19 alongside our established practices, we will re-open a food industry that will gain Puerto Rican's trust. The Food Code, adopted by the **Health Department**, requires every restaurant to:

- ✔ Prohibit sick employees to work.
- ✔ Strict hand washing policy (including when and where one must wash their hands).
- ✔ Strict procedures and practices for cleaning and sanitizing surfaces (discussed further ahead).
- ✔ Assure that every person in charge of foods has the corresponding certification and is found at the restaurant during their operating shift.
- ✔ Discard all expired food.
- ✔ "Buffets" (salads or hot foods) require a sneeze guard.
- ✔ Change, wash and sanitize utensils frequently and place appropriate sneeze guards in open areas.
- ✔ If it is necessary to serve the food (ex.: cafeterias), adequate sneeze guards and protective equipment for the employee is required.



## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EMPLOYEES UPON RE-OPENING

To prepare to comply with re-opening procedures, restaurants must update their existing operating procedures and policies in accordance to the guidelines published by the FDA, CDC, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), the Health Department's protocol, laws, the Department of Labor and other regulations towards:

- ✔ Social distancing and protection team
- ✔ Employee's health
- ✔ Cleaning/sanitizing/disinfecting
- ✔ Control Plan against COVID-19 exposure

Access materials through the following links:

- [FDA Published Guidelines](#)
- [List of products that comply with EPA criteria](#)
- [Occupational Safety and Health Act \(OSHA\)](#)
- [Health Department Protocol \(In Spanish\)](#)
- [Notifications of new executive orders and the Department of Labor \(In Spanish\)](#)

## BEST RECOMMENDED PRACTICES



## CLEANING RECOMMENDATIONS

- ✓ Fulfill a detailed cleanup of the restaurant's entire facility, especially if it remained closed during quarantine.
- ✓ Focus on areas or surfaces of high contact that are accessible to both employees and clients.
- ✓ Do not overlook surfaces you may think are not constantly contacted.
- ✓ Follow the applicable guidelines to ensure all cleaning products used are effective for sanitizing and protecting surfaces.
- ✓ Avoid using disinfectants on areas being used to prepare foods.
- ✓ Utensils, menus and condiments will be of single use, or will be cleaned and disinfected after each use. However, the use of disposable menus is recommended, as well as condiments and single-use utensils.
- ✓ Implement procedures to augment the number of occasions in which surfaces are cleaned and sanitized in areas within the kitchen and food preparation.
- ✓ Verify bathrooms are regularly cleaned according to its use frequency.
- ✓ Keep hand sanitizer dispenser in all entrances and where needed, according to the **Health Department** requirements.

## BEST RECOMMENDED PRACTICES

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SOCIAL DISTANCING IN DINING ROOMS AND SALONS

- ✓ Update the dining room floor plan to redistribute tables and chairs, limiting its capacity to a 25% (as per the Construction Code).
- ✓ Redistribute tables and chairs, assuring they are 6 feet apart.
- ✓ If practical, especially in restaurants with “booths”, use sneeze guards to assure social distancing are permitted.
- ✓ Consider installing a business model with prior reservation services; it will allow you to coordinate the use of the space within the restaurant.
- ✓ It is recommended to limit the number of people per table to a maximum of six (6).
- ✓ Every measure towards social distancing that takes into consideration the area’s square feet, must also consider the waiting areas.
- ✓ If you count on a food delivery service company or receive suppliers, inform them about the implemented social distancing requirements.
- ✓ Place a sign on the entrance that indicates that no person with a fever or other present COVID-19 symptoms will be allowed to enter the establishment.
- ✓ Limit physical contact between employees and clients.
- ✓ According to the **Health Department**, employees must wear gloves and masks at all times.
- ✓ If necessary, physical barriers, such as ropes or acrylic guards at registers are accepted.
- ✓ If possible, use technology to reduce physical interaction. For example, receive orders on the phone or through tablets, contactless payment methods (including cash) or others.
- ✓ Provide hand sanitizer for the customers.
- ✓ Avoid conglomeration in waiting areas.
- ✓ Design a process to ensure that clients will remain 6 feet apart if they have to wait seated. Method can include markings on the floor with the measured distance, distancing outside the local, waiting in the car, etc.
- ✓ In regard to the employees, avoid working stations being to up front or close, trying to maintain the 6 feet parameter. If it’s not possible, make sure employees use gloves and masks, as well as frequently sanitize the area.
- ✓ Limit the number of employees in the resting station.
- ✓ For big work staff, use boards or digital messages to send information before their shift starts.

## BEST RECOMMENDED PRACTICES

## EMPLOYEES (ACTUAL REQUIREMENTS)

- ✓ Employees must use masks (cloth or an available material), gloves and any other protection equipment to prevent crossed contamination, according to the **Puerto Rico Health Department's** protocol and **CDC** recommendations. The **CDC** also asserts that masks must be kept clean.
- ✓ Employee's temperature will be taken prior to their shifts, as the **Health Department** requires. The **CDC** indicated that a temperature of 100°F is a fever. Employees must also answer simple questions in regard to their health prior their shifts.

### What questions can a restaurant ask to their employees to perform a necessary health screening before every shift?

**Yes** or **No** questions are recommended in order to keep a balance between obtaining the information you need to keep a safe workspace and avoid overstepping the employee's right to privacy. All employees should answer the questions before entering their work shift. The following are model questions or declarations:

- Do you have any of the following symptoms: fever, muscle pains, cough, or difficulty breathing?
- Have you been in close contact with a person diagnosed with COVID-19?
- Are you waiting for results from a COVID-19 test?
- Have you traveled outside of Puerto Rico in the last 14 days?
- I understand my responsibility to take days off if I manifest COVID-19 symptoms or if I have been in recent contact with someone diagnosed with COVID-19.
- I understand my responsibility to comply with health code standards for the restaurant's health and sanitation.

- ✓ According to the **Food Code**, sick employees must remain in their homes.
- ✓ Train your employees about the importance of frequently washing their hands, the use of hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% of alcohol and provide clear instructions to avoid touching their face.
- ✓ Employers are required to create and implement a **Prevention Plan Against COVID-19** and submit it along with an Auto-certification to the Department of Labor (DTRH): [autocertificacionprosha@trabajo.pr.gov](mailto:autocertificacionprosha@trabajo.pr.gov). You can access it [here \(Document in Spanish\)](#).

## BEST RECOMMENDED PRACTICES

## COMPLIANCE AUTO-CERTIFICATION

Every employer planning on re-opening is obligated to notify the Puerto Rico Department of Labor (DTRH) with a document titled **Employer Auto-Certification** alongside a plan before operating the business. The referred plan was already required by the [OSHA Guidelines](#).

## CONTROL PLAN AGAINST COVID-19 EXPOSURE: DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION

Restaurants exempt to the closing must submit the **Employer Auto-Certification** as soon as possible. The restaurant may continue operating, even if they have not notified the certification, but diligence for this required.

Restaurants who are currently closed and in preparation to re-open must submit the **Patronal Auto-Certification** prior to their restaurant's opening.

The document must be sent along with the **Control Plan Against COVID-19 Exposure** to the following email: [autocertificacionprosha@trabajo.pr.gov](mailto:autocertificacionprosha@trabajo.pr.gov).

In the **Employer Auto-Certification**, the patron shall include all required basic information and will certify that their **Control Plan Against COVID-19** complies with the 22 essential elements detailed in the **DTRH Letter 2020-03**. Among said elements are the following: the plan is written, it includes recommendations from applied health agencies, contains an employee protocol, a cleaning protocol, a distancing protocol, a security team, a protocol in case the event of having an employee COVID-19 positive, etc.

Once the employer sends the **Auto-Certification** and the **Control Plan** to the indicated email address, they can commence operating their business and their facilities shall adjust to the established parameters by the **PR OSHA** and the **CDC**.

The **PROSHA Consulting Program** provides free service, no punitive, for patron assessment and orientation over the phone (787) 705-6678 or through email [consultasprosha@trabajo.pr.gov](mailto:consultasprosha@trabajo.pr.gov).



**EMPLOYER AUTO-CERTIFICATION**  
Control Plan Against COVID-19  
Available [here](#).

**BEST  
RECOMMENDED  
PRACTICES**



## **HOW CAN PARTICIPATING RESTAURANTS COMMUNICATE THEIR INTEGRATION IN OUR COMMITMENT?**

It is vital that restaurants communicate their commitment directly to their employees and monitor behavior. Restaurants must communicate their affiliation with **OUR COMMITMENT** with signs at their entrance. If they have social media pages or a website, they may also upload their affiliation.



# CLIENT RESPONSIBILITIES

## WHY MUST CLIENTS BE INCLUDED IN OUR COMMITMENT?

Clients are included because society holds the responsibility to comply with necessary health code guidelines established to prevent the spread of COVID-19. If we all work together, an equilibrium will be sustained.

## WHAT COMMITMENTS MUST WE ASK OF OUR CLIENTS?

- ✓ If they have been exposed to COVID-19 recently or if they have symptoms (including fever, cough or difficulty breathing) they must help us stay healthy using food delivery options without compromising our personnel.
- ✓ If they have underlying health conditions or if they are worried to get infected, they must feel free to choose the food delivery option without meeting contact with restaurant personnel.
- ✓ If they have any questions in regard to **OUR COMMITMENT**, they can ask to consult the manager, we are at their disposition.

## WHAT CAN RESTAURANTS DO TO HELP CLIENTS MEET THE AGREEMENTS?

It is recommended that restaurants maximize the use of food delivery services to limit physical contact and advertise this option as much as possible. Besides, advertising **OUR COMMITMENT** should increment client's compliance.

# ADDITIONAL RESOURCES AND NEXT STEPS

## WHAT RESOURCES AND SUPPORT ARE AVAILABLE IN REGARD TO OUR COMMITMENT INITIATIVE?

ASORE will share OUR COMMITMENT with the Executive and Legislative branches, municipalities and the media as a message to announce that we are ready to safely operate. We will be at the industry's disposition to answer any questions and provide support for our re-opening restaurants.

The National Restaurant Association announced that the ServSafe Food Handler Program is free until May 31st. You may access the following training programs:

- ServSafe Takeout: COVID-19 Precautions
- ServSafe Delivery: COVID-19 Precautions
- ServSafe Food Handler

You may access the Health Department "Protocol for Establishments that Prepare and Serve Food" [here \(Document in Spanish\)](#).

From the FDA: [Best Practices for Retail Food Stores, Restaurants, and Food Pick-Up/Delivery Services During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)



## JOINT AGREEMENT OUR COMMITMENT

**OUR COMMITMENT** agreement is included on the next page. We recommend printing it with your restaurant logo and placing it in a visible place in your establishment in order to inform the public.



Asociación de Restaurantes de Puerto Rico

# OUR COMMITMENT

## COMMITMENT OF THE RESTAURANT INDUSTRY OF PUERTO RICO

The Puerto Rican restaurant industry has a record of excellence protecting their employee's and client's health. Let us welcome you once again to our dining halls. For the safety of us all, we ask you to comply with the following mutual agreements:

### COMMITMENT WITH OUR CLIENTS

Your  
logo  
here

- ✓ We will continue to be leaders in sanitation practices according to requirements from Puerto Rico's Health Department, including specific protocols for COVID-19.
- ✓ Our employees and supervisors will be certified with the Safe Food Management license.
- ✓ We will clean and disinfect the restaurant's common areas consistently. Tables and chairs will be cleaned and disinfected consistently after every use.
- ✓ We will monitor our employee's health, excusing all those who fall ill.
- ✓ Sitting options to eat meals in the establishment will comply with all the necessary social distancing guidelines recommended by government agencies.
- ✓ We will share a sign of **OUR COMMITMENT** in our establishment's entrance so everybody knows the steps we take to maintain our communities healthy and safe.

### OUR CLIENT'S COMMITMENT WITH US

- ✓ If the client has been exposed to COVID-19 recently or is manifesting symptoms (including fever, cough and difficulty breathing), they should help us keep our establishment safe by using our delivery or carry out services.
- ✓ The restaurant will, at their discretion, take the client's temperature upon their arrival as a preventive measure.
- ✓ If the client has underlying medical issues or is worried about potential infection, they have the liberty to use our delivery or carry out services.
- ✓ If they have any questions in regard to **OUR COMMITMENT** of the **Restaurant Industry of Puerto Rico**, they must please ask to speak to a manager. We are at their disposition.

# Puerto Rico

## RESTAURANTS CONTRIBUTION TO THE ECONOMY



Estimated restaurants:  
**4,000**  
APROX.



Employees:  
**64,000** APROX.  
Income:  
**\$19,000** ANNUAL AVERAGE



Annual sales:  
**\$1,970**  
**millions**  
APROX.

**CURRENT ECONOMIC  
SITUATION OF  
RESTAURANTS  
DUE TO COVID-19**

**Closed restaurants: 47%**

**Partially operating:  
53% and 68% with reduced staff**

**Permanent closures:  
50% will not open again**

**Sales reduction: 75% or more**



[Restaurant.org](https://www.restaurant.org) • [Asorepr.com](https://www.asorepr.com)

# BEST PRACTICES

## FOR RETAIL FOOD STORES, RESTAURANTS & FOOD/PICK-UP DELIVERY SERVICES DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

FDA is sharing information about best practices to operate restaurants, retail food stores and associated pick-up and delivery services during the COVID-19 pandemic to safeguard workers and consumers.

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 curbside pick-up
- Practice social distancing by offering to place orders in vehicle trunks



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For more information, please visit:  
[asorepr.com/nuestrocompromiso](http://asorepr.com/nuestrocompromiso)

