

# How to turn your restaurant into a temporary corner store.

The COVID-19 is having an overwhelming effect on the restaurant industry, limiting the types of service restaurants can offer. We created this guide to transform a restaurant into a corner store, with the hopes it may help create a new source of revenue for operators.

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**Gordon**  
FOOD SERVICE

## Why transform into a corner store?

1. Minimize waste and sell extra inventory
2. Generate revenue
3. Be able to pay your staff
4. Bring the community together
5. Try a new concept for the long-term

# 1. Understand your inventory

## 1. Evaluate your inventory and decide what you want to sell.

Consider common food items and cleaning supplies that are in high demand. Identify what you want to sell as is and what you might want to sell as part of a package.

### COMMODITY ITEMS

These are items that people need at home on a day-to-day basis. Here's a list of items that are disappearing quickly from grocery aisles that can be sold independently.

Flour, Rice, Beans, Pasta, Bread, Eggs, Cheese, Poultry, Frozen goods, Canned goods, Pasta sauce, Alcohol, Paper towels, Toilet paper, Tissues, Wipes, Sanitizer, Hand soap.

[See GFS's recommended products.](#)

### MEAL PACKAGES

If you have specialty ingredients in your stock that don't often get used in meals that people make at home, consider selling them as part of a meal/cocktail kit.

Meal kits based on restaurant recipes, Cocktail kits, Gift baskets.

[See an example gift basket from Don's Diner and Cocktails in Milwaukee.](#)

### PREPARED MEALS

Reduce your menu to items that can be put together quickly in the kitchen or that your customers love and come to you for.

Grab-and-go-meals, Dinner specials.

## 2. Price your offerings.

Pricing for commodity items will be different from pricing for meals kits and menu items.

### COMMODITY ITEMS

Standard markup for grocery stores is typically **between 15-40%**. Some convenience service markup can be up to 100-200% depending on the product.

Produce 50 - 70%  
Meats 30 - 60%  
Dry goods 25%  
Dairy 30 - 60%  
Eggs 30 - 60%  
Alcohol 100 - 300%  
Household items 25 - 50%

### MEAL PACKAGES

Standard markup for kits is **60-85%** depending on whether it is a meal kit or cocktail kit.

### PREPARED MEALS

Priced as per your **usual 'delivered food' prices.**

# 2. Choose how to serve your customers

## 1. Update your menu on your online channels.

Set up or update your online store. Toast and Square offer services that connect with your current POS.

[Get started with Toast](#)

[Get started with Square](#)

[Check out Bar Biscay's online store](#)

[Check out Valerie Echo Park's online store](#)

## 2. Set up your fulfillment channel.

Here are some ways to reach your customers. Choose what makes the most sense for your restaurant.

### WALK-IN CORNER STORE

Food is displayed and customers interact with the items.

**you will need:**

- Sufficient space to allow customers to shop while making sure they can practice social distancing in the restaurant.
- Time and human resources to make layout changes. Mobile furniture, shelves and re-usable containers that can serve as a display.
- Sanitizers and gloves dispensers by the entrance and the checkout.



### CURBSIDE OR WINDOW PICKUP

Food is delivered outside the restaurant. Customers never interact with the items.

**you will need:**

- Resources for delivery like packaging and to-go containers.
- A window at a reach for both employee and customer.
- A wireless payment system/ terminals if the customer is paying on-site.



### HOME DELIVERY

Use third-party delivery partners to fulfill your orders. You can also consider providing an independent delivery service for orders placed within a reasonable distance.

**you will need:**

- Off-premise services like GrubHub, UberEats, DoorDash, Caviar and OneDine.
- and/or
- A dedicated delivery driver with a car/truck.
  - A planned schedule for delivery.



# 3. Set up your space for walk-in customers

## 1. Repurpose your space to make room for new offerings.

Even if you decide not to let customers in, there are advantages to making changes to your layout that will suit your delivery process.

- Use your dining space to make shopping aisles for commodity products. Try to keep aisles 8 feet apart to maintain social distancing safety standards.
- Turn your tables into grocery stands.
- Set up chairs for buyers while they wait outside.
- Set up 3 feet markings using tape or traffic cones at the billing counter so that customers can keep a safe distance from each other.

## 2. Think about how to display your inventory.

Here are some ideas to get you started.

- Repurpose your storage containers for produce displays.
- Keep meat and dairy in coolers if you don't have refrigerated shelves. If you can't find coolers, you can set up a sign for customers to ask you for these products.
- Pre-package your dry goods like flour, pasta, rice into standardized portions.
- If you have grab-and-go shelves, use them for produce/dairy.
- Repurpose drawers as storage containers.
- Display clearly the item's price, limit per customer, discounts and bundles.

## 3. Use best practices for social distancing and safety.

Whether your door is open or closed, follow these recommendations to keep your restaurant sanitary.

- Sanitize all items, produce and ingredients delivered to your restaurant prior to stocking it.
- Ensure all equipment and utensils are washed, rinsed and sanitized prior to closing and opening.\*
- Perform a routine cleaning on high touch surfaces by employees and customers (POS systems, keyboards, handles to equipment, restrooms, door handles).\*
- Make a routine cleaning on frequently touched items and high traffic areas.\*
- Provide disposable packaging and utensils.
- Provide disposable gloves to employees handling the food.
- Locate sanitizer dispensers by the entrance and checkout.
- Keep an 8ft distance between aisles.
- Restrict the number of customers shopping at the same time.

### **\*FROM THE CDC:**

"If surfaces are dirty, they should be cleaned using a detergent or soap and water prior to disinfection. For disinfection, diluted household bleach solutions, alcohol solutions with at least 70% alcohol, and most common EPA-registered household disinfectants should be effective."

# 4. Gather your staff

## 1. Decide on opening hours.

Consider what you are serving on your menu, the type of customers that come to your restaurant and grocery store traffic patterns to determine the best hours to remain open.

### EXAMPLE

### RECOMMENDED HOURS

I serve breakfast and brunch. I'm usually open in the mornings and early afternoon.

**8 AM - 4 PM**

I serve lunch and dinner. I'm usually open from noon to late at night.

**11 AM - 9 PM**

### CLOSING DAYS

Some restaurants are closing two days a week to dedicate to planning and receiving deliveries.

## 2. Make sure your staff is prepared.

You need to have the right team performing different functions now. Make sure you are aligned on the new tasks if they are now different.

### ASSESSMENT

### QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

#### HEALTH

- Are they healthy?
- How do they know?
- How will you ensure they stay healthy?

#### AVAILABILITY

- Are they available during your open hours?
- How many shifts will be needed?

#### ONBOARDING

- Do they know how to sell retail?
- Will they need training?
- How much time will the training take?

#### EMPLOYMENT

- How will you pay them?

### NEW EMPLOYMENT TASKS

- Register handling
- Layout set up
- Shelf re-stock
- Item sanitation
- Cleaning / furniture sanitation
- Food Delivery (window, curbside)
- Packets assembly
- Food delivery driver (home delivery)

### 3. Keep your staff safe.

Make sure you are taking precautions to keep your staff and your restaurant safe.

Make a screening prior to letting staff inside your restaurant premises. Ask for symptoms and keep a record.

- Fever
- New or worsening cough
- Shortness of breath
- Sore throat

Provide protective equipment to minimize contamination.

- Gloves
- Facemask (if available)
- Sanitizer
- Soap
- Tissues

Perform routine checks and encourage behavioral changes.

- Throw away gloves every other hour
- Washing hands every hour
- Use sanitizer after receiving a customer's debit/credit card

Encourage a positive and honest communication between employee and manager.

- If any of them develop symptoms at home before or after coming to work, request to stay at home in isolation.
- If any of them develop symptoms during working hours, provide a facemask and request to go home or the closest hospital.

## 5. Get the word out

### 1. Adapt your brand.

Consider rebranding your restaurant temporarily to include “market” or “bodega” in the name.



'Bodega' is the Spanish word for a small grocery store.

## 2. Create publicity material.

Update all your communication channels to reflect the pantry items and other offerings on sale.

### DIGITAL MATERIAL

For social media and other online channels.

- Shareable catalog of what the restaurant is selling
- Testimonial videos from chefs and restaurant owners
- Photos of offerings
- Instagram posts

### ANALOG MATERIAL

For the restaurant and the products on display.

- Restaurant window signage
- Branded packaging
- Stickers/stamps

[See how Zinc / Bar Mateo in L.A. is doing it](#)

[See Centennial, Chicago's promo video.](#)

## 3. Use social media, forums and groups to get exposure.

Tell and share your story with customers and local media. Use these channels to communicate your corner store's items and other offerings on sale.

Here are some resources to get you started.

### SPREAD THE WORD ON SOCIAL MEDIA

- Keep your restaurant website up to date
- Update your restaurant's social media channels
- Use Instagram stickers like 'StayHome' for your stories.
- Use Facebook neighborhood groups to keep your community updated
- Tag all your posts with local media and news outlets

### LOOP IN NEIGHBORHOOD NETWORKS, LOCAL GROUPS AND INFLUENCERS.

- Get featured in local news
- Get featured on this site (contact Eat.news to add your story).
- Write a press release and send it to your local media and news channels.
- Ask a local influencer to visit your store and post about it.

### TRENDING HASHTAGS ON INSTAGRAM AND TWITTER

#COVID-19  
#supportlocalrestaurants  
#saverestaurants  
#localfood

Look for hashtags that are related to your neighborhood.

Use hashtags related to local news and media channels.

[See how Dimo's, Chicago is doing it.](#)

[See how Berdie G's in LA is doing it.](#)

## 4. Run promotions.

Give discounts in return for free promotions, send free 'necessity items' with food deliveries.

## 5. Track your channels.

Use Google Analytics to follow web traffic on your website and keep track of what ads and posts are creating the most traction.

# Checklist

**We created this guide to transform a restaurant into a corner store, with the hopes it may help create a new source of revenue for operators.**

1. Involve your sales representative.	
2. Evaluate your inventory and decide what you want to sell. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Commodity items</li><li>• Meal kits / packages</li><li>• Prepared meals</li></ul>	
3. Price your offerings.	
4. Update your menu on your online channels.	
5. Set up your fulfillment channel. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Walk-in store</li><li>• Curbside pickup</li><li>• Window pickup</li><li>• Home delivery</li></ul>	
6. Repurpose your space to make room for new offerings.	
7. Think about how to display your inventory.	
8. Use best practices for social distancing and safety.	
9. Decide on opening days and opening hours.	
10. Gather your staff and make sure they're prepared.	
11. Keep your staff safe.	
12. Adapt your brand and get the word out. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Create publicity material.</li><li>• Use social media, forums and groups to get exposure.</li><li>• Run promotions.</li><li>• Keep track of your channels.</li></ul>	