



**A Guide to Restaurant Audits:
HOW TO NAIL GUEST
EXPERIENCE THROUGH
EFFECTIVE AUDITS**

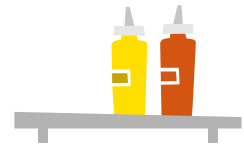




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The Importance of Effective Audits for Health & Safety, Brand Reputation and Profit

The U.S. restaurant industry surpassed **\$1 trillion in sales in 2024** and is projected to reach **\$1.1 trillion in 2025**, according to the [National Restaurant Association](#). Needless to say, as an operations leader in the hospitality industry, your job has never been more important than it is right now.

But whether you're a part-time server, a general manager, or an operations director, there's one word guaranteed to strike fear into the heart of anyone working in the restaurant industry: **audit**.

Why Audits Are Not Going Away Anytime Soon

There are a shocking [48 million cases](#) of food-borne illnesses reported every year in the United States alone. If health and safety standards aren't upheld to the letter, there can be serious consequences.

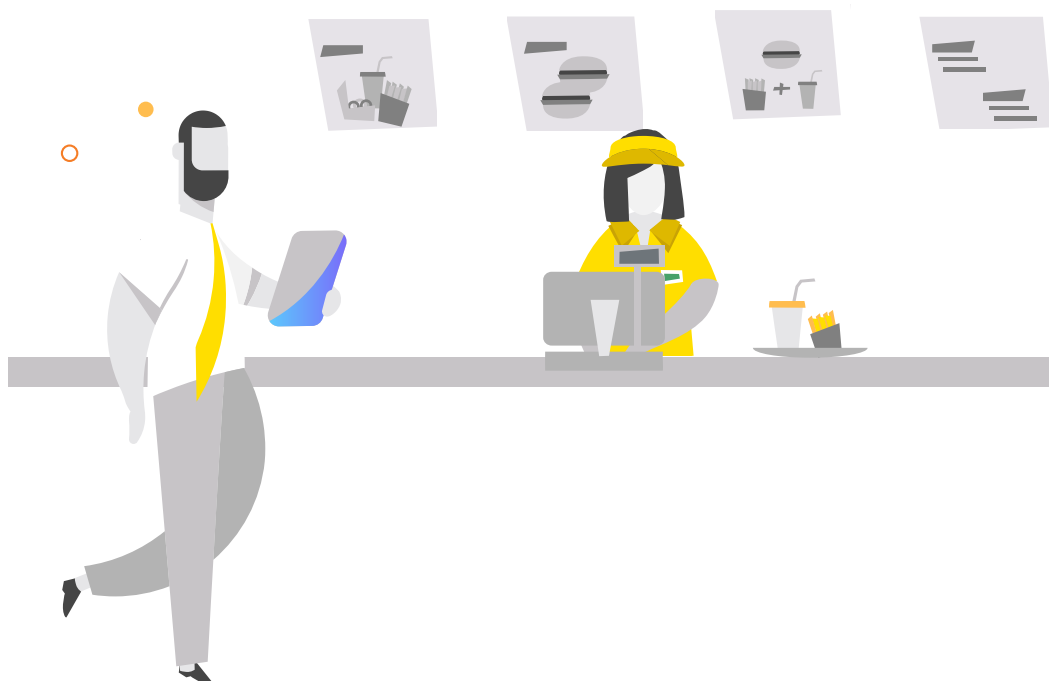
Subpar standards can seriously damage a brand's reputation. [Chipotle is a prime example](#): between 2015 and 2018, multiple food-borne

illness outbreaks **sickened over 1,100 people**. In **2020**, the chain paid a **record \$25 million fine to resolve criminal charges** — the largest ever in a food safety case. While Chipotle has since improved its safety protocols, the impact on public trust was significant.

Although they seem to have recovered and regained the public's trust for now, such a serious outbreak can do lasting damage to a brand - as can poor online reviews.

90% of guests check out a restaurant online before eating there and 33% would never eat at a restaurant with less than a four-star rating.

Conversely, a one-star improvement on Yelp can boost a restaurant's profits by [9%](#), showing that ensuring consistency in your restaurants will directly correlate to bottom-line revenue.



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Profits also take a hit when health and safety standards slip. A single foodborne illness outbreak could cost **\$2,000 to over \$2.6 million**, depending on restaurant type, format, and incident severity.

The only way to avoid health and safety scandals is with a **perfect audit process**. Properly done, audits are the key to creating a perfect guest experience that will keep people coming back for seconds.

But as we mentioned earlier, audits are the most dreaded part of working in hospitality.

This comes down to 3 main issues:

- **The audit process is outdated, insufficient and not standardized**
- **The data gathered isn't properly communicated to, or utilized by, store teams**
- **Audits are seen as a punishment, rather than a valuable learning experience which exposes areas for improvement and opportunities for further training**

These things can all be very easily fixed with the right tools. And once a perfect audit process is in place, the rest will follow.



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Employee Safety

Hot pans, sharp knives, tripping hazards, and cramped kitchens, combined with the expectation of delivering high-quality food, quickly creates a complex challenge. That's why training on hazard communication standards and proper labelling of hazardous substances are essential. Any potential dangers, such as spillages, damaged appliances or cluttered pathways, should also be flagged up and fixed immediately. Making sure the first aid kit is properly stocked and checking that employees have received proper first aid training - and crucially, remember how to put it into action - are all ways to ensure the safety of your staff.



Employee Hygiene and Cleaning Schedules

When carrying out an audit, watch out for things like:

- **Handwashing** - are they washing often/thoroughly enough?
- **Cross-contamination** between food, particularly raw meat
- **Health** - are employees working when they should be off sick? Are any wounds or skin conditions covered?

There should also be specific checklists for daily, weekly and monthly cleaning tasks, and a thorough record should be kept of what has been cleaned, when, and by whom. Don't think that customers don't notice the little things. An unhygienic dining experience is hardly going to have your guests hungry for more.

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Employee Knowledge

Here are just some of the knowledge and skills employees should have at their fingertips if quizzed:

- Opening and closing procedures
- Fire safety procedure
- In-depth knowledge of the menu
- Guest service skills

Any gaps in employee knowledge can then be fixed while the regional manager is on-site. A regional manager's job is to help restaurants perform their best, so staff should make the most of their expertise and learn all they can from them!



Allergen Checks

Allergies are a serious concern for restaurants. Not being careful enough in the kitchen, or neglecting to properly inform customers about the ingredients in their food, means risking being at fault if something goes wrong. Kitchen staff should receive proper training on how to deal with allergens in the food preparation stage, and front-of-house staff should have impeccable knowledge of the allergens on the menu.



Merchandising Execution

Your merchandising teams put a lot of time and effort into creating a concept that best serves your brand identity. But all that effort goes to waste if their vision isn't properly realized. Audits should include a section for ensuring that merchandising displays are properly implemented and maintained, and that food is being displayed in line with the brand guidelines set by the chief culinary officer.

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But Just Carrying Out the Audit Isn't Enough

You can have the most thorough and efficient audit process in the world in theory, but unless it's actually being implemented properly, it's not worth a thing.

Here are some vital questions to ask yourself when assessing your current audit process:

Are we using our time efficiently?

The time taken to compile and circulate information after completing an audit is laborious, taking on average 45 minutes or more for each visit. Sometimes this leads to data not being properly logged, or even certain required questions being missed out. Why deal with that when the regional manager could complete the audit in real-time instead?

Are we following up properly?

Audits are only effective if the feedback given is then put into action. Make sure that the audit procedure is followed up soon afterwards to check how the relevant changes are being implemented by restaurant teams.

Are paper-based processes slowing us down?

Pretty much every aspect of our lives is now digitized. So why are restaurant operations so often still stuck in the dark ages? Paper checklists are unnecessarily time-consuming for auditors to fill in, and leave more room for human error. Not to mention the impact it has on the environment!

Is the auditor spending enough time with staff?

The whole point of having an auditor visit sites is that they are experts in their field who know how to get the best out of restaurant teams and provide a stellar guest experience. They should actually be able to spend time coaching and advising staff, rather than simply filling in a checklist and moving onto the next site.



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Are we collecting the relevant data?

Data is the most powerful asset any business can have. Restaurants can utilize customer data to inform their decisions and improve guest experience. However, it's also important to determine which data is actually useful in enhancing your brand. In other words - an audit doesn't need hundreds of questions, just the right ones. Using a digital audit tool that allows users to jump to the relevant questions for their role is a great way to do this.

Could the process be more streamlined?

Continuous re-evaluation should be high-priority for any restaurant. There will always be new ways of making restaurant operations more efficient and more productive, and a streamlined audit process gives staff the agility to make those improvements.

Is the audit report easy to read and understand?

If your audit report isn't easily digestible for the General Manager or Operator, it's useless. Clear, actionable insights and instructions are the key to effective audits.

Are we leveraging the appropriate data to guide strategic insights? Gathering vast amounts of data from your restaurants opens up a whole world of possibilities. Has a downturn in sales in a particular franchise location been flagged? Or maybe you've noticed a trend of incomplete checklists across your network? Now you can easily drill down to the root of these problems before they get out of hand.



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Your Mini Audit Checklist

Here are a few ideas to get you started.



Site Appearance & Ambience:

- ✓ Is the exterior of the site well-maintained? (No trash outside, no graffiti, clean windows and facade)
- ✓ Is the furniture clean, functional and in good condition?
- ✓ Are the layout and decor of the restaurant in compliance with HQ brand standards?
- ✓ Is the music selection and volume level appropriate?
- ✓ Are menus and promotional offers up-to-date and clearly displayed?
- ✓ Are tables properly set?

Safety, Cleanliness & Hygiene:

- ✓ Are all food preparation areas clean and free of hazardous substances?
- ✓ Do staff wash their hands regularly and thoroughly?
- ✓ Is the first aid kit fully stocked?
- ✓ Have staff recently had occupational health and safety training? And are they able to demonstrate their knowledge of OHS procedures?
- ✓ Is produce properly labelled, stored at the right temperature and still within its expiration date?
- ✓ Are all approved utensils and equipment being used and properly maintained?
- Are trash cans taken out regularly and not overflowing?

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Guest Service/Hospitality:

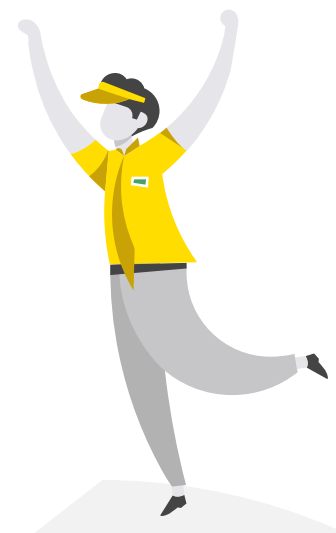
- ✓ Are guests greeted and seated promptly?
- ✓ Are front of house staff friendly and welcoming towards guests? Is food served promptly and correctly?
- ✓ Are the needs of guests prioritized by staff?
- ✓ Are staff anchored to appropriate locations?

Employee Training & Knowledge:

- ✓ Have new hires been given proper training since their arrival?
- ✓ Do staff show a thorough knowledge of the menu, and in particular allergen information?
- ✓ Have longer-serving members of staff recently been given any refresher training?
- ✓ Do staff know all the relevant procedures for opening and closing? Do staff know all emergency procedures?

Product Quality:

- ✓ Do the line-cooks adhere to the recipes approved by HQ?
- ✓ Is the merchandising section laid out correctly in compliance with culinary director guidelines?
- ✓ Is food cooked and served at the right temperature?



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Your Fastest, Most Accurate Audits Ever with YOOBIC

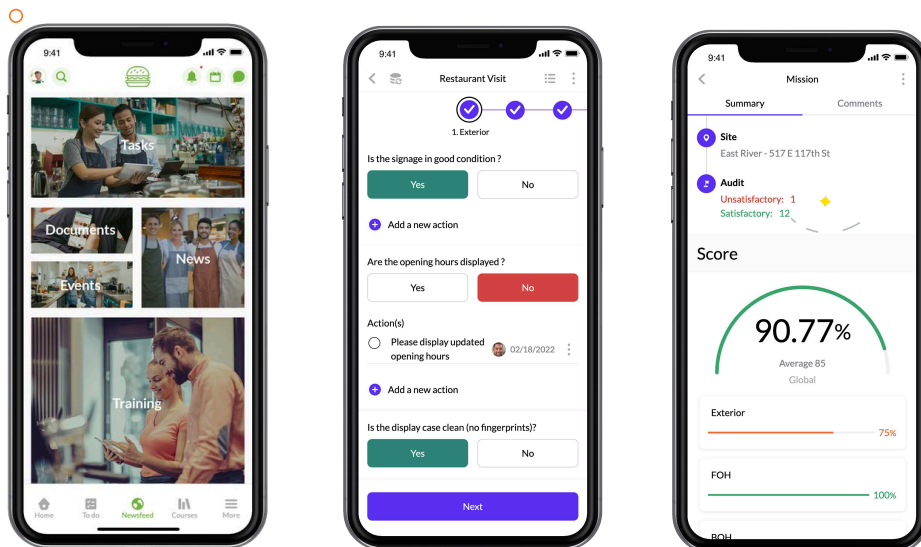
With YOOBIC, you can combine the entire audit process into one easy step. Our digitized audit process, tailored to your restaurant chain's needs, saves 45 minutes per visit on average. **That's around 200 hours a year per regional manager!**

Why Field Teams Love Us:

- Easy to locate pre-work for visit preparation
- A mobile-friendly platform for deskless workers on the go
- User-friendly visit forms with automatic scoring
- 45 minute reduction in post-work follow-up per visit, on average

Why HQ Teams Love Us:

- Real-time analytics sent directly to HQ
- Standardized and actionable data to guide strategic insights
- Adoption rates by area managers of almost 95% after 4 months



YOOBIC helps you get to the root cause of issues within your restaurant network. Gathering all the relevant data in the app will help you pinpoint, understand and solve problems before they negatively affect guest experience, and inform how you can improve that experience every day.

To find out more about how to create the ultimate audit procedure with YOOBIC, why not request a demo?

SIGN ME UP!

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