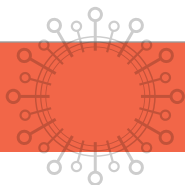




Safety First

Serving Food and Protecting
People During Covid-19





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In moments of crisis, chefs and restaurant owners jump in feet first. They take action. They want to help—not just the food service industry but their communities. Soon after restaurants shut down, that was the defining characteristic in every chef and restaurant owner I talked to for an [article](#) in *The Atlantic*, where I'm a longtime senior editor.

José Andrés, of course, always sets the worldwide example in global crisis response through his [World Central Kitchen](#), and the coronavirus pandemic has been no exception. [The James Beard Foundation](#) helped create the [Independent Restaurant](#) Coalition right away to support struggling restaurants. [The Lee Initiative](#) gave restaurant owners and chefs the tools and support to stand up again. And in my reporting, I learned about [Off Their Plate](#), a great new group that in just a few weeks raised \$3.5 million to feed frontline health workers.

All these groups were helping restaurants hire back their most vulnerable workers—the ones unable to access the social safety net, most with families to support—to prepare meals for health care workers. All offered careful safety protocols. But all were a bit different. Some guidelines were short; some were way long. With the help of the restaurants, nonprofits, and Katherine Miller, the vice president of impact at the James Beard Foundation, I collected 11 different protocols. Taken together, they point to the need for one streamlined, authoritative operating guide.

As the executive director of the Aspen Institute's [Food and Society Program](#), which improves public health by giving people of all income levels ways to eat better and more healthful diets, I looked for guidance from experts from the [Centers for Disease Control](#). I asked if they would help compile, write, and review an easily accessible, authoritative set of operating procedures for restaurant kitchens and workers during the age of Covid-19. Happily, the [Laurie M. Tisch Illumination Fund](#) had already embarked on a visionary series of grants to help New York City health workers both physically and mentally in their fight against COVID-19. Their support set us on our path forward.

A great stroke of luck led me to Dr. Sam Dooley, a 32-year veteran infection-control specialist at the Centers for Disease Control. His experience in containing tuberculosis, HIV, and SARS all suited him to the task he dug into with infinite patience and wry wit. Our goal is to tell chefs, managers, and restaurant owners how their procedures need to change in the era of COVID-19. These are not just the clean-kitchen and safe-food procedures they already know of. These guidelines are first and foremost about keeping workers safe.

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You'll find here first a baker's dozen of 13 commandments—basic operating rules any kitchen should follow—which serve as a kind of executive summary of everything that follows. The guide itself leads with an excellent, clear summary of how COVID-19 spreads, which will clear up many points of confusion for any curious person (like me) interested in sensible precautions, and then goes on to advise managers and all workers on how to organize work spaces and workflow. Dr. Dooley's explanation of source control, which begins the "In the Workplace" section for all workers, explores how best to protect yourself and the people around you: first check your own health and that of your co-workers before you come in to work and again when you start and leave each shift; then rigorously clean the surfaces and areas you control—particularly, of course, your hands. You'll find excellent hand-washing and sanitization instructions in the appendices. You'll also find here World Central Kitchen's delightful Masky posters, after the appendix section. By now it should be obvious: always wear a fabric face covering!

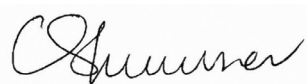
Throughout this process, Natalie Guo and Tracy Chang from Off Their Plate have been unstinting in their generosity, time, and expertise. So has Vaughn Tan, of University College London and Rethink Food and the author of the new *The Uncertainty Mindset: Innovation Insights from the Frontiers of Food*.

We hope you'll use and rely on Safety First. Each chapter is available as a separate PDF, easily downloaded and printed out. We'll soon have a full Spanish-language version available, to be followed by Mandarin. We'll be updating all sections regularly as CDC guidance and other advice changes: in every section and particularly each appendix, we list and link to our sources.

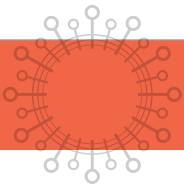
Now that some cities and states are cautiously reopening restaurants, the next step is to keep servers and diners safe and comfortable. We're in an exciting phase of gathering ideas on how to do just that, as we monitor each state's guidelines, as well as those of national agencies. We expect to have new additions to our protocols in the next few weeks. And we'll also be working on a next phase of best practices to keep workers in both good financial and physical health.

The other defining characteristic of chefs: they're generous. I thank all of them and welcome all additional thoughts!

Corby Kummer



Find me on Twitter @CKummer



Safety First

A Baker's Dozen



- 1 Understand how Covid-19 is spread and think about this with every decision**
- 2 Assign a workplace Covid-19 coordinator**
- 3 Establish and clearly communicate policies and procedures for preventing Covid19 transmission**
 - Do not work if feeling ill, have Covid-19, or are Covid-19-positive but asymptomatic
 - Wear a face covering at all times, and don't touch your eyes, mouth, or nose
 - Keep physically distant
 - Learn how to wash and sanitize hands correctly, and do it often
 - Clean and disinfect surfaces and objects
 - Cover coughs and sneezes
 - Use "no contact" transfers for all receiving of supplies and food delivery and pickup
- 4 Screen workers on arrival for fever, symptoms of Covid-19, and exposure to Covid-19 and send home if ill**
- 5 Organize workers into teams working alternating shifts or days if possible**
- 6 Structure workplace design and operations for physical distancing wherever possible**
- 7 Place fully stocked (soap and towels, hand sanitizer) handwashing or hand-sanitizing stations everywhere**
- 8 Frequently clean and sanitize or disinfect commonly touched surfaces and objects**
- 9 Maintain ventilation, dishwashing, and plumbing systems and clean or replace ventilation filters**
- 10 Constantly reinforce policies and procedures with signage and pre-shift briefings**
- 11 Enforce policies and procedures consistently and equitably**
- 12 Limit entrance into workplace to workers—no delivery personnel**
- 13 Implement flexible and supportive sick leave and compensation policies**