



Section 1, Setting Up

In this section you will learn

- ▶ What should you bear in mind in the set-up stage?
- ▶ How can you ensure that the premises are suitable for a restaurant?
- ▶ What kind of competence is required from you and your staff?
- ▶ What else is required of you?
- ▶ How should you notify the authorities of your plan for setting up and running a restaurant?
- ▶ What other important things do you need to remember even before you begin?
- ▶ What is the own-check plan and where can you get help for drawing it up?

Suitable premises

When you find premises that you like, check with the municipal building supervision authority that they are intended for the purpose you had in mind. This will normally guarantee that the building or premises are technically suitable for a restaurant, for example, that they are adequately ventilated.

It is also good to contact the municipal food control authority at this early stage.

From the authority, you can confirm that the premises are suitable for your intended purpose.

What does "use prescribed in the building permit" mean?

The municipal building supervision authority approves the use of premises or a property as, for example, a restaurant, shop, office or industrial facility.

The intended use of premises is specified in their building permits, and the premises may not be used for other purposes than those approved in the building permits.

What happens if the premises have not been approved for the use that you require?

If you want to use the premises even though their intended purpose is not suitable, you will require a building permit for changing the prescribed use of the premises.

You may need to make major renovations to, for example, the ventilation or water fixtures.

Check with your municipality's building supervision whether you can apply for the building permit yourself or whether it is the task of some other party, such as the housing company.

When you are applying for a change to the prescribed use of premises, please keep in mind the following considerations:

In these situations, you will have to be prepared for planning costs, such as hiring a designer. Find out the competence requirements for designers from the municipal building supervision authority.

Building may not start until the building permit is final.

Premises may not be put to a new use before the building supervision authority has approved it in a final inspection.

Can there be other obstacles to the operation of the restaurant apart from those related to the building permit?

Check with the housing company that your intended operation can be run in the property you had in mind.

The company’s articles of association can include provisions regarding the use of premises.

Are the premises suitable to run your restaurant?

When you are thinking about whether the premises are suitable for your intended purpose, the minimum consideration is whether or not your restaurant can be sensibly run on the premises.

Find out whether or not there are enough water fixtures and toilet facilities and sufficient storage space on the premises. If you think you would like to expand the restaurant at a later date, choose sufficiently large or modifiable premises from the start.

Also consider whether the processing of food could require a large and expensive surface renovation.

The food inspector and advisory organisations will be able to advise you on these matters. Information on advisory organisations is available via the links on our website.

The Premises section of this guide also contains additional information on the requirements for premises.

Design the premises so that the following will be easy to implement:

- Do not allow customers or other external parties onto premises where food is processed.

- Do not process food products close to the front doors. Above all, this should be avoided if people use the door during processing.
- Place food preparation and processing areas so that passage through them, for example, from outside to the dressing room or food storage, is minimised.
- Store non-food products so that they will not leave smells or taste in foodstuffs. Also ensure that they will not pose a danger if they break.
- Remove any unnecessary items, such as furniture, devices and utensils no longer being used, from the premises since they collect dust. They can also cramp the spaces and make cleaning more difficult.

How to notify the authorities of your business?

You must submit a “notification of food premises” no later than four weeks before opening the restaurant. The notification is filed with the food control authority of the municipality in which your restaurant is located.

If you make significant changes to the operations of your restaurant in a manner that increases the food hygiene risk, you must file a notification of significant changes in operations.

For example, starting to serve food in your pub is a significant change.

You can obtain a notification form from your municipality’s website or the municipal food inspector. On the web site of the City of Helsinki, for example, you will find the form with the search term “notification of food premises” or “food premises notification”.

Every food control area has its own form pre-completed with the information specific to that area. You can use the same form to file a notification of significant changes in operations.

When can you start operations?

Submit the notification at least four weeks before opening your restaurant.

You do not have to wait for a response or the initial inspection, however. You are free to open your restaurant before them.

You have filed the notification, what happens next?

1. The food control authority will respond in writing.
2. The response will state that your restaurant has been included within the scope of regular control.
3. The municipal control authority will usually contact you in order to agree on a date for the first visit. However, the food inspector can also make an inspection without prior notice.
4. The food inspector will visit your restaurant for a first control visit. This is called the initial inspection.
5. During the visit, you and the inspector will review the suitability of the facilities for running a restaurant. The inspector will also check that your own-check plan has addressed the risks of your operations to a sufficient extent. The food inspector will also instruct you on how you can improve the own-check plan.
6. The municipality will charge a fee for processing the notification and the performance of regular control in the future. The amount of the fee is stated in the municipality's tariff list. The tariffs are listed on the website of the municipality in which your restaurant is located.
7. If you are uncertain of how to arrange operations in the kitchen of your restaurant, you can ask for advice in advance from your food inspector. Don't hesitate to ask if you need help and advice.

Requirements for kitchen staff

Persons who process perishable foods professionally must have a hygiene passport and wear appropriate protective clothing. A hygiene passport is a certificate of competence for demonstrating familiarity with food hygiene.

If necessary, the employees must also be able to reliably demonstrate that they do not have salmonella infection.

The purpose of all these requirements is to ensure the safety of foodstuffs. These personnel requirements will be discussed in more detail in the Staff section of this guide.

What are perishable foods?

Perishable foodstuffs refers to food in which bacteria that spoil the food or cause food poisoning can grow rapidly if the food is not stored at/in the correct temperature and conditions.

For example, fish, grated carrots and raw sausages are perishable foodstuffs.

Non-perishable foodstuffs can keep for a long time at room temperature and dry conditions. These include, for example, nuts, spices and flour.

Own-check plan

You must draw up an own-check plan before starting operations.

The purpose of the own-check plan is to help you describe your operations and manage the food hygiene risks associated with them.

The Finnish Hospitality Association, or MaRa ry, has drawn up best practice and own-check guidelines for restaurants, titled "Omavalvonta ravintoloissa - elintarvikkeet" (only available in Finnish).

The Finnish Food Safety Authority Evira has reviewed and approved the guideline.

Drawing up your own-check plan is easy with MaRa's own-check guidelines.

The guidelines provide a ready-made assessment of the risks associated with your line of business, along with methods for their management.

The in-depth questions will help you consider the functions of your own business. MaRa offers the own-check guidelines for free to its members and sells the document to non-members.

You can also draw up the own-check plan yourself. You can find materials for drawing up the plan in this guide and on the websites of many food control authorities.

Some sample links to such information are provided on the same web page with the link to this guide.

Drawing up the own-check plan will be discussed in more detail in the Own-check plan section of this guide.

Serving licence and other important issues not provided for in the Food Act

- **Are you planning to serve alcohol?**
Serving alcohol requires a licence. You must apply for the licence from the Regional State Administrative Agency. More information on serving alcohol is available on the website of Valvira. A link is provided on the same web page with the link to this guide.
- **Are you planning to sell tobacco?**
The sale of tobacco products and nicotine fluids is also subject to licence. If you intend to sell such products in the restaurant, you will need to apply for a permit from the municipality. More information is available on the website of Valvira.
- **Should the restaurant be accessible?**
Aspects such as the maximum number of customers and age of the building

can affect the restaurant's structural accessibility requirements.

Ask your municipality's building supervision authority about them.

- **Are you planning to include a terrace?**
You may need the consent of the municipality and housing company. Ask the building supervision authority about this.
- **Are there any other regulations concerning running a restaurant?**
The fire and rescue authorities also have their own safety requirements for restaurants. Links to additional information are provided on the same web page where the link to this guide.

Summary

When you are setting up a restaurant:

- ▶ Check with the municipal food control authority and building supervision authority to make sure that the premises are suitable for your restaurant.
- ▶ Notify the authorities of your operations by filing a food premises notification.
- ▶ Make sure that all members of the cooking staff have hygiene passports, health certificates and protective clothing.
- ▶ Take care of any other necessary matters and permits.
- ▶ Draw up an own-check plan.