

# Opening a Cafe: Your Ultimate Checklist from Essential Coffee

If you are considering opening a Café, there is a lot to consider. Fortunately, we have experience in this area and are happy to outline the key points you should consider, to start serving that perfect Coffee! Don't be put off by the emergence of large-scale chains out there, there is definitely still a strong market for the independent coffee shop. And customers love a unique atmosphere, design, menu and customer service that you can bring.

The following points and checklist should give you a guide to everything you will need to consider. The checklist could be long, but its important you take into account all of the nuances to ensure your success.

## Research the Industry

Opening a café can appear to be a daunting prospect, that will take a large amount of research, time and money. Its important that you have an understanding of the industry and what is required to be a successful café owner. In your research, you should try to speak to existing café owners, note their layouts, atmosphere, is the coffee good, are the staff knowledgeable? What makes them different? What is their unique selling point? When are they busiest? Do they generate the majority of their turnover from takeaways or in-dining? Are they price competitive? Is their menu attractive and does it cater to different tastes? Understanding all of these points will be critical to ensuing your business is set-up from day one.

## Define your Brand and Vision

When the thought of opening a café first comes to mind, you will no doubt have visions of the style, branding and theme that you wish to have. Make notes of all of these and start collecting samples of layouts, menus and décors that inspire you. Think of the kind of food you would like to offer, what's the lasting memory you want your customers to have of your café, what you want to be known for etc? Note some of the finer details, what sort of coffee mugs, what colours.. How knowledgeable are your staff, how courteous. You need to think ahead for the success of your business and understanding customers is key.



## **Create a business plan**

Developing a business plan can be hard work and easy to put into the 'too hard basket'. However, defining the plan, will assist you in considering all of the potential requirements you may face. It should guide you through the stages of developing and establishing your café and will serve as the guide of how to position, structure and manage your business and its gets off the ground.

## **Finding the right location**

Establishing the right location is critical is ensuring that your new café will succeed. You will want to look at factors such as the amount of foot traffic, is it around other businesses and in a central location? Is there adequate parking? Are the utilities in place to support your café? Can you afford the monthly rent and expected overheads from a utilities perspective?

Is there a current café that is not performing, but you see potential? Something like this may already have a loyal customer base, they may just be doing something wrong? As long as the location meets the above criteria, it could mean potential. This will also go some way in ensuring the utilities you require may already be in place.

## **Register your business**

You will need to register your trading name with the relevant government body. You will also need an inspection of your property to ensure it conforms to the local requirements for running a café.

## **Partner with Suppliers**

This is where Essential Coffee can help! When setting up your business, it's essential that you have a great supplier of coffee, along with all of the other food services that you plan to offer. You will need to determine how many blends you wish to sell, are they existing offerings or perhaps a white label blend, specifically for your business. Can they provide you with advice on the right equipment, how to grind their beans and what to expect from customers? What about the consumables and packaging such as takeaway coffee cups. It's important to partner with suppliers who can assist with as many requirements as possible, as this will limit the number you need to deal with and will simplify your financial arrangements, and ultimately save you money.



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## Invest in high-quality equipment

The old adage 'you get what you pay for' rings true when talking about coffee equipment. You are going to need to ensure the equipment is capable of supporting your coffee estimates and be reliable! The last thing a café wants is a broken coffee machine! You will also need to consider grinders, milk fridges, blenders, freezers – in fact you'll need a machine for every beverage and food item you think you will offer. Look for brands that have a strong reputation and are well known in the industry. And don't forget a POS register, eftpos facilities and a tip-jar!



## Employees

Probably as equally important as serving great coffee! You need to choose employees who match your brand, but above all are confident, efficient and are customer centric. A great barista with industry experience is worth their weight in gold. Equally, a cashier or waiter / waitress who can communicate well, understands your menu and provide ideas, whilst at all times remaining friendly and personable will go along way in establishing repeat clientele.

Staff can make or break your business. Get the staff right and customers will return, get them wrong and you'll have trouble.



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## Aesthetics & Branding

Have you got a name for your café? Does it represent your offering? Is it a modern look or are you looking for something more retro? Are you focusing on customers with a certain food preference ie healthy, vegetarian or vegan? Is it a family friendly feel you are looking for, if so have you considered child booster chairs and a kids menu – ie milk shakes! What about the layout? Is it clear and simple with easy access to both the registers and tables? Are you planning to display food in counters around your café? Will you brand your prominent throughout the café, are you cups branded etc? What about the lighting, is it clear and bright or a darker vibrant style? Can staff access all areas of the café efficiently? The store room, the kitchen, can the barista work their magic efficiently and effectively? Remember, you cant please everyone but go with a style you believe and back yourself in. A lot to consider here, but a great atmosphere and happy customers, means a lot of repeat business. The biggest thing that attracts customers is customers!



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## Your Menu

Your menu should represent what your café is and tie in with your brand and theme. Your offerings need to be explained with detailed descriptions and priced-in line with the market expectations. Do you have a signature dish, if so call it out! The biggest thing from menu perspective is to keep it in line with what you can effectively cover. Its no good having too many items that require you to keep excess stock that you might not always be able to produce. And again, you wont be able to please everyone! Consider vegetarian, vegan and gluten free options. Make sure your menu is clear and concise as its one of the first things that customers read / view when they walk into your café – you want to capture their attention with this!

## Sell yourself and make some noise

When it comes time to open, make some noise! Consider some initial offers to get customers in the door. What about samples, loyalty cards, local area marketing. Have you got a website and social media channels set up. These are a great way to showcase your business and have your menu accessible to a greater audience. The more you can promote your business, the more customers will come. And remember, word of mouth is still one of



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the best mediums out there. Serve great coffee, great food and great service and people will talk!

**GOOD LUCK**



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