

# DUBAI RESTAURANT STARTUP CHECKLIST

The Complete Step-by-Step Guide to Launching Your Restaurant in Dubai

By GGB Consulting | ggb.consulting | +971 50 346 0478

This checklist covers every step from initial concept to opening night. Use it to track your progress and ensure nothing falls through the cracks. Based on 45+ restaurant launches in Dubai.

## PHASE 1: CONCEPT & PLANNING (Weeks 1-4)

### Concept & Market Research

- Define your restaurant concept in one sentence
- Identify your target customer segment (demographics, spending patterns)
- Research competitors within 1km of target locations
- Conduct footfall analysis at 3 potential locations (different times/days)
- Complete a formal feasibility study
- Define your unique selling proposition (USP)
- Choose cuisine type and service style (fine dining, casual, QSR, cloud kitchen)

### Financial Planning

- Calculate total startup budget (include 30% contingency)
- Create detailed P&L; projections (conservative, moderate, optimistic)
- Create 12-month cash flow forecast
- Secure funding (savings, investors, bank loan)
- Set target food cost percentage (28-33%)
- Set target labour cost percentage (25-30%)
- Define break-even timeline (typically 12-18 months)

## PHASE 2: LEGAL & LICENSING (Weeks 3-8)

### Trade Licence

- Reserve trade name with DET (AED 620)
- Get initial approval from DET (AED 120)
- Choose legal structure (Mainland LLC / Free Zone)

- Draft Memorandum of Association
- Obtain DET trade licence (AED 10,000-15,000)
- Register with Dubai Chamber of Commerce (AED 1,200)
- Obtain establishment card / immigration card (AED 2,000)

#### **Food Safety & Compliance**

- Apply for Dubai Municipality food safety permit (AED 2,000)
- Develop HACCP food safety management system
- Complete HACCP certification audit (AED 12,000-25,000)
- Schedule Civil Defence fire safety inspection
- Install/verify fire safety systems (sprinklers, alarms, exits)
- Obtain Civil Defence approval
- Apply for alcohol licence if applicable
- Register for trade waste disposal

## **PHASE 3: LOCATION & DESIGN (Weeks 4-10)**

#### **Location**

- Shortlist 3 locations based on feasibility study
- Negotiate lease terms (aim for stepped rent or % of revenue)
- Verify existing kitchen infrastructure (gas, extraction, grease trap)
- Confirm electrical capacity for commercial kitchen equipment
- Check parking availability and delivery access
- Sign lease and register Ejari (AED 220)
- Obtain landlord NOC for fit-out

#### **Kitchen & Restaurant Design**

- Hire professional kitchen designer
- Finalise kitchen layout (workflow, stations, equipment placement)
- Design dining room layout (covers, flow, accessibility)
- Specify all kitchen equipment (ranges, ovens, refrigeration, ventilation)
- Design bar area if applicable
- Plan storage areas (dry, cold, frozen)
- Design staff areas (changing, break room, restrooms)
- Submit fit-out plans to Dubai Municipality for approval

## **PHASE 4: OPERATIONS SETUP (Weeks 8-12)**

#### **Menu & Supply Chain**

- Develop full menu with recipe cards (exact weights and measures)

- Cost every recipe (target food cost 28-33%)
- Apply menu engineering framework (Stars/Plowhorses/Puzzles/Dogs)
- Source and contract 3+ suppliers for each major ingredient category
- Negotiate supplier payment terms
- Set up inventory management system
- Design and print menus
- Complete food photography for delivery platforms and marketing

### **Staffing**

- Recruit Head Chef and Restaurant Manager first
- Recruit remaining kitchen brigade
- Recruit front-of-house team
- Process all employee visas (AED 2,660 per person)
- Arrange mandatory health insurance for all staff
- Complete food handler medical testing for all food staff
- Develop SOPs for every station and role
- Conduct 2-week intensive pre-opening training programme

### **Technology**

- Select and install POS system (Foodics, Lightspeed, Toast, or Square)
- Integrate POS with delivery platforms (Talabat, Noon Food, Deliveroo)
- Set up reservation system (SevenRooms, OpenTable, or QLess)
- Set up accounting software
- Set up payroll system
- Create Google Business Profile
- Set up social media accounts (Instagram, Facebook, TikTok)
- Build or launch website with online menu

## **PHASE 5: LAUNCH (Weeks 11-14)**

### **Pre-Launch**

- Complete final Dubai Municipality inspection
- Complete final Civil Defence inspection
- Conduct full equipment testing (every piece of kitchen equipment)
- Run staff dress rehearsal (full service simulation)
- Set up all delivery platform listings with photos and descriptions
- Prepare marketing launch plan (social media, influencers, PR)
- Order opening inventory (3-day supply minimum)
- Test all POS functions, payment terminals, and receipt printing

### **Launch Sequence**

- Friends & Family soft opening (3-5 days, invite-only, free/discounted)
  - Collect and act on all feedback from F&F; opening
  - Controlled soft launch at 50% capacity (1-2 weeks)
  - Fix all issues identified during soft launch
  - Grand opening at full capacity
  - Activate marketing spend (social media, Google Ads, influencer visits)
  - Begin daily KPI tracking (revenue, covers, food cost, labour cost)
  - Schedule first monthly financial review for Day 30
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## Need Help With Your Restaurant Launch?

GGB Consulting has launched 45+ restaurants in Dubai. We handle every item on this checklist so you can focus on your vision.

**Book Your Free Consultation: +971 50 346 0478**

**[daya@ggb.consulting](mailto:daya@ggb.consulting) | [ggb.consulting](http://ggb.consulting)**

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