FRESH DEPARTMENT OPERATIONS AUDIT TEMPLATE

Fresh Department Audit Checklist

Audit produce, bakery, deli, meat, seafood, dairy, receiving, temperatures, freshness, preparation, display, sanitation, inventory, waste, and corrective actions.

STORE / LOCATION	AUDIT DATE	AUDITOR	APPROVER

1. Audit setup, department scope, and ownership

1 Confirm the store, audit date, operating status, auditor, department managers, food safety owner, and escalation contacts. METADATA + SIGN-OFF

NAME | Enter — TIME | __:__ — SIGNATURE | Sign

Execution tip: Verify ownership for produce, bakery, deli, meat, seafood, dairy, and any locally prepared fresh range.

2 Define the departments, service counters, preparation rooms, cold rooms, displays, storage zones, and support areas included in the audit. AREA SCOPE CHECKLIST

Compliant — Partially compliant — Non-compliant — N/A

Execution tip: Record exclusions and confirm the sample reflects every active fresh-food process.

3 Review previous audit scores, customer complaints, temperature breaches, waste trends, supplier issues, and overdue corrective actions. PREVIOUS FINDINGS REVIEW

Current — Incomplete — Missing / expired — Attach record

Execution tip: Use repeat failures to guide product, equipment, employee, and record samples.

4 Verify current SOPs, specifications, food safety limits, quality standards, recipes, labels, cleaning plans, and escalation rules are available. CRITICAL DOCUMENT VERIFICATION

Current — Incomplete — Missing / expired — Attach record

Execution tip: Check version, approval, issue date, and whether employees can access the current standard.

5 Record current staffing, delivery activity, production volume, promotions, seasonal ranges, equipment outages, and unusual trading conditions. OPERATING CONTEXT

Compliant — Partially compliant — Non-compliant — N/A

Execution tip: Capture conditions that affect risk while keeping required controls unchanged.

6 Capture the audit start time, geo-location, and an approved reference photo of each audited fresh department. CRITICAL GEO-LOCATION + TIMESTAMP + PHOTO

Compliant — Issue found — Critical gap — Add live photo

Execution tip: Confirm the correct store and department before capturing evidence.

2. People, hygiene, PPE, and service readiness

7 Verify employees wear clean uniforms, suitable footwear, hair restraints, beard covers, gloves, and required protective equipment.
CRITICAL | PERSONAL HYGIENE CHECK
Compliant | Partially compliant | Non-compliant | N/A
Execution tip: Observe employees during receiving, preparation, replenishment, and customer service.

8 Check handwashing stations are accessible, functional, clean, and supplied with water, soap, hygienic drying, and instructions.
CRITICAL | HANDWASH STATION READINESS
Compliant | Partially compliant | Non-compliant | N/A
Execution tip: Test every sampled station and replace missing supplies immediately.

9 Observe handwashing, glove changes, utensil handling, and task transitions for compliance with hygiene procedures.
CRITICAL | OBSERVED PRACTICE + PHOTO
Compliant | Issue found | Critical gap | Add live photo
Execution tip: Watch live work rather than relying only on training records or manager confirmation.

10 Confirm illness reporting, fitness-to-work, wound covering, jewelry, eating, drinking, phone use, and personal-item controls are followed.
CRITICAL | EMPLOYEE PRACTICE VERIFICATION
Compliant | Partially compliant | Non-compliant | N/A
Execution tip: Ask employees how they report symptoms and verify recent cases where applicable.

11 Verify service-counter employees understand product handling, customer requests, allergens, substitutions, complaints, and escalation steps.
CRITICAL | KNOWLEDGE CHECK
Compliant | Partially compliant | Non-compliant | N/A
Execution tip: Use a short scenario relevant to the department and record the response.

12 Assess staffing, role coverage, break planning, opening readiness, and customer service availability during the audit window.
STAFFING AND READINESS RATING
Strong | Needs attention | Critical gap | Create action
Execution tip: Compare planned deployment with actual workload, queues, and production tasks.

3. Receiving, supplier, and incoming quality controls

13 Inspect sampled fresh deliveries for approved supplier status, correct product, intact packaging, clean condition, and traceability.
CRITICAL | RECEIVING SAMPLE + PHOTO

Compliant | Partially compliant | Non-compliant | N/A

Execution tip: Capture evidence before affected goods are moved, accepted, rejected, or returned.

14 Verify delivery vehicles, totes, trays, crates, pallets, and handling equipment are clean and suitable for fresh products.
CRITICAL | DELIVERY HYGIENE CHECK

Compliant | Issue found | Critical gap | Add live photo

Execution tip: Inspect product contact points and contamination risks before unloading.

15 Match purchase order, delivery note, item, variety, grade, pack size, quantity, batch, date, and origin information.
CRITICAL | DOCUMENT AND PRODUCT MATCH

Compliant | Partially compliant | Non-compliant | N/A

Execution tip: Trace sampled products from documents to the physical delivery and system receipt.

16 Measure sampled chilled, frozen, or hot-delivered products against the approved receiving temperature range.
CRITICAL | RECEIVING TEMPERATURE

Strong | Needs attention | Critical gap | Create action

Execution tip: Use a calibrated device and record the item, supplier, time, location, and exact result.

17 Inspect produce, bakery ingredients, meat, seafood, dairy, deli items, and prepared foods for freshness and acceptance criteria.
CRITICAL | INCOMING QUALITY RATING

Sample	Expected	Actual	Result	Evidence

Execution tip: Use product-specific appearance, odor, texture, packaging, and shelf-life standards.

18 Verify rejected, damaged, contaminated, short-life, or non-conforming goods are identified, segregated, recorded, and resolved.
CRITICAL | REJECTION AND QUARANTINE RECORD

Compliant | Partially compliant | Non-compliant | N/A

Execution tip: Do not allow rejected goods into usable stock while supplier action remains open.

4. Cold chain, temperatures, and equipment control

19 Measure sampled chilled display temperatures across different shelves, cabinets, counters, or product zones.
CRITICAL | CHILLED DISPLAY TEMPERATURE

Strong | Needs attention | Critical gap | Create action

Execution tip: Take readings from representative points and investigate repeated borderline results.

20 Measure sampled cold-room and back-of-house refrigeration temperatures against approved limits.
CRITICAL | COLD-ROOM TEMPERATURE

Compliant | Partially compliant | Non-compliant | N/A

Execution tip: Compare displayed readings with an independent device where required.

21 Measure freezer temperatures and inspect products for thawing, freezer burn, leakage, damaged packaging, or ice build-up.
CRITICAL | FREEZER TEMPERATURE + CONDITION

Current | Incomplete | Missing / expired | Attach record

Execution tip: Check loading, airflow, seals, defrost condition, and alarm history when readings fail.

22 Where hot food is prepared or displayed, verify cooking, holding, cooling, reheating, and time controls are completed correctly.
CRITICAL | HOT-FOOD PROCESS VERIFICATION

READING | ___ °C | LIMIT | Enter | Add photo | Create action

Execution tip: Record both time and temperature when the control depends on both.

23 Verify thermometers, probes, data loggers, alarms, and display sensors are clean, functional, identified, and verified or calibrated.
CRITICAL | MONITORING EQUIPMENT TEST

READING | ___ °C | LIMIT | Enter | Add photo | Create action

Execution tip: Record device ID, reference standard, actual result, tolerance, and action taken.

24 Confirm temperature failures trigger product assessment, containment, transfer, disposal, repair, and escalation as required.
CRITICAL | TEMPERATURE BREACH ACTION

Current | Incomplete | Missing / expired | Attach record

Execution tip: Document affected products, exposure time, decision authority, and closure proof.

5. Product quality, freshness, rotation, and availability

25 Sample fresh products for appearance, color, odor, texture, ripeness, cut quality, packaging, damage, and saleability.
CRITICAL | PRODUCT FRESHNESS RATING

READING | ___ °C | LIMIT | Enter | Add photo | Create action

Execution tip: Use the approved specification and sample high-volume, high-risk, and slow-moving items.

26 Verify use-by, best-before, packed-on, prepared-on, thawed-on, opened-on, and discard labels are complete and accurate.
CRITICAL | DATE-CODE SAMPLE

READING | ___ °C | LIMIT | Enter | Add photo | Create action

Execution tip: Include products prepared, opened, repacked, sliced, or thawed in store.

27 Confirm FIFO or FEFO rotation is followed in displays, preparation areas, cold rooms, and back stock.
CRITICAL | ROTATION VERIFICATION

READING | ___ °C | LIMIT | Enter | Add photo | Create action

Execution tip: Check products behind, below, and beneath newer stock rather than only front-facing items.

28 Identify expired, spoiled, damaged, contaminated, leaking, discolored, or otherwise unfit products and remove them immediately.
CRITICAL | UNFIT PRODUCT CONTROL + PHOTO

Sample	Expected	Actual	Result	Evidence

Execution tip: Record quantity, location, disposition, and inventory adjustment.

29 Check priority fresh lines are available at the required level without overfilling, unsafe stacking, or excessive back stock.
AVAILABILITY AND CAPACITY CHECK

Current | Incomplete | Missing / expired | Attach record

Execution tip: Balance availability with shelf life, production plan, and display capacity.

30 Verify product substitutions, reduced-to-clear decisions, donation, repurposing, and disposal follow approved authorization rules.
CRITICAL | DISPOSITION APPROVAL

Compliant | Partially compliant | Non-compliant | N/A

Execution tip: Keep quality, food safety, customer information, and inventory records aligned.

6. Preparation, production, and contamination prevention

31 Observe fresh-food preparation and verify approved recipes, yields, portioning, cutting, cooking, cooling, packing, and holding steps.

CRITICAL | PROCESS OBSERVATION

Sample	Expected	Actual	Result	Evidence

Execution tip: Compare live execution with the current procedure and product specification.

32 Verify knives, boards, trays, utensils, scales, slicers, grinders, mixers, ovens, and other equipment are clean and suitable.

CRITICAL | EQUIPMENT HYGIENE + PHOTO

Compliant | Issue found | Critical gap | Add live photo

Execution tip: Inspect dismantled parts, seals, guards, joints, and hard-to-clean contact areas.

33 Confirm raw, cooked, ready-to-eat, allergen-controlled, chemical, waste, and packaging activities are adequately separated.

CRITICAL | CROSS-CONTAMINATION CONTROL

Sample	Expected	Actual	Result	Evidence

Execution tip: Review workflow, vertical storage, shared tools, employee movement, and temporary staging.

34 Sample allergen information, recipes, ingredient labels, changeovers, cleaning, packaging, and customer communication for accuracy.

CRITICAL | ALLERGEN CONTROL SAMPLE

Compliant | Issue found | Critical gap | Add live photo

Execution tip: Trace one product from ingredient information through preparation and final label or service.

35 Verify production planning, batch size, preparation time, cooling capacity, display capacity, and expected demand are aligned.

PRODUCTION PLANNING CHECK

Finding	Owner	Priority	Due	Evidence

Execution tip: Use recent sales and waste information to prevent overproduction and unsafe holding.

36 Create immediate containment and corrective action for any contamination, allergen, cooking, cooling, or process-control failure.

CRITICAL | CRITICAL FRESH-FOOD ACTION

Finding	Owner	Priority	Due	Evidence

Execution tip: Stop the affected process where required and isolate impacted food before continuing.

7. Display, merchandising, labeling, and customer information

37 Verify displays, counters, cases, trays, risers, liners, utensils, guards, and customer-contact surfaces are clean and presentable.

CRITICAL | DISPLAY CONDITION + PHOTO

Current | Incomplete | Missing / expired | Attach record

Execution tip: Inspect under trays, edges, seals, drains, handles, and frequently touched areas.

38 Check products are arranged according to approved category, brand, seasonal, color-blocking, and replenishment standards.

MERCHANDISING COMPLIANCE

Compliant | Partially compliant | Non-compliant | N/A

Execution tip: Compare actual execution with the current plan or visual reference.

39 Verify product names, prices, unit prices, origin, weight, grade, ingredients, allergens, dates, and handling instructions are accurate.

CRITICAL | LABEL AND PRICE VERIFICATION

READING | | ___ °C
LIMIT | | Enter
Add photo | Create action

Execution tip: Match shelf, pack, scale, and POS information for sampled items.

40 Confirm self-service displays have suitable utensils, covers, sneeze guards, liners, tongs, bags, and contamination controls.

CRITICAL | CUSTOMER PROTECTION CHECK

Compliant | Partially compliant | Non-compliant | N/A

Execution tip: Observe how customers use the area and correct contaminated utensils or product immediately.

41 Check sample products scan or transact at the displayed price, weight, markdown, promotion, and tax treatment.

CRITICAL | POS AND PRICE SAMPLE

EXPECTED | | ___
ACTUAL | | ___
VARIANCE | | ___
Investigate

Execution tip: Retain the sampled SKU, displayed price, transaction result, and evidence.

42 Assess overall presentation, abundance, freshness cues, lighting, signage, queue condition, and service-counter readiness.

DEPARTMENT PRESENTATION RATING

Sample	Expected	Actual	Result	Evidence

Execution tip: Rate the department from a customer viewpoint while documenting objective gaps.

8. Cleaning, sanitation, pest, waste, and facility condition

43 **Verify cleaning schedules cover food-contact surfaces, equipment, utensils, floors, drains, cold rooms, displays, and high-touch points.**

CRITICAL | CLEANING SCHEDULE CHECK

EXPECTED | | ___ | ACTUAL | | ___ | VARIANCE | | ___ | Investigate

Execution tip: Compare scheduled frequency with actual use, soil level, and recent completion records.

44 **Inspect sampled surfaces for residue, grease, debris, biofilm, blood, food particles, standing water, and incomplete sanitation.**

CRITICAL | SANITATION INSPECTION + PHOTO

Sample	Expected	Actual	Result	Evidence

Execution tip: Check hidden areas, joints, undersides, seals, drains, and dismantled equipment.

45 **Sample sanitizer concentration, contact time, warewashing, or other verification parameters against the approved standard.**

CRITICAL | SANITATION VERIFICATION

Compliant | Partially compliant | Non-compliant | N/A

Execution tip: Record product, test method, expected range, actual result, and corrective response.

46 **Verify chemicals, cleaning tools, cloths, brushes, mops, buckets, and PPE are labeled, segregated, clean, and correctly stored.**

CRITICAL | CHEMICAL AND TOOL CONTROL

Sample	Expected	Actual	Result	Evidence

Execution tip: Prevent cross-use between raw, ready-to-eat, customer, and waste zones.

47 **Inspect for pest activity, entry points, damaged traps, standing water, waste build-up, leaks, and structural hygiene defects.**

CRITICAL | PEST AND FACILITY INSPECTION

Strong | Needs attention | Critical gap | Create action

Execution tip: Map the location and escalate any activity near open food or food-contact surfaces.

48 **Verify waste, trimmings, bones, used oil, spoiled food, packaging, donations, and returns are controlled and recorded.**

WASTE HANDLING RECORD

Current | Incomplete | Missing / expired | Attach record

Execution tip: Keep waste routes separate from clean food and reconcile material quantities where required.

9. Inventory, yield, shrink, waste, and record accuracy

49 Reconcile sampled fresh-stock quantities with system balances, production records, transfers, markdowns, waste, and sales.

CRITICAL | INVENTORY RECONCILIATION SAMPLE

Sample	Expected	Actual	Result	Evidence

Execution tip: Include high-value, high-waste, variable-weight, and fast-moving products.

50 Verify weights, scale readings, tare settings, pack counts, recipe yields, and portion standards are accurate.

CRITICAL | WEIGHT AND YIELD VERIFICATION

Current | Incomplete | Missing / expired | Attach record

Execution tip: Use approved reference weights and record the equipment ID used.

51 Review waste by reason, department, product, employee, shift, supplier, and value for unusual or recurring patterns.

WASTE TREND REVIEW

Compliant | Partially compliant | Non-compliant | N/A

Execution tip: Separate controllable handling loss from unavoidable trim and approved quality rejection.

52 Check markdown timing, reduced labels, donation, repurposing, returns, and disposal decisions are authorized and traceable.

CRITICAL | MARKDOWN AND DISPOSITION AUDIT

Sample	Expected	Actual	Result	Evidence

Execution tip: Confirm the product remains safe, accurately labeled, and correctly adjusted in inventory.

53 Verify production, temperature, cleaning, traceability, calibration, pest, training, and corrective-action records are complete.

CRITICAL | RECORD COMPLETENESS SAMPLE

Compliant | Partially compliant | Non-compliant | N/A

Execution tip: Compare records with physical conditions and system timestamps rather than reviewing forms alone.

54 Assess department shrink, gross-margin risk, supplier rejection, customer complaints, and action closure against targets.

PERFORMANCE SCORECARD

Current | Incomplete | Missing / expired | Attach record

Execution tip: Keep food safety and quality failures visible even when financial results appear acceptable.

10. Findings, corrective actions, verification, and sign-off

55 Rate overall compliance across produce, bakery, deli, meat, seafood, dairy, preparation, displays, sanitation, and records.

CRITICAL | FRESH DEPARTMENT SCORECARD

Strong | Needs attention | Critical gap | Create action

Execution tip: Keep critical failures visible even when the overall percentage appears acceptable.

56 Record the highest-priority findings, affected product or area, quantity, customer exposure, severity, likelihood, and containment.

CRITICAL | PRIORITY FINDING REGISTER

Strong | Needs attention | Critical gap | Create action

Execution tip: Use standard severity definitions so departments and stores can be compared consistently.

57 Create corrective actions with owner, priority, due date, root-cause requirement, evidence, and escalation path.

CRITICAL | CORRECTIVE ACTION + SLA

Finding	Owner	Priority	Due	Evidence

Execution tip: Write each action so another person can understand the risk and expected closure proof.

58 Confirm every critical temperature, contamination, allergen, freshness, hygiene, pest, or traceability risk is contained or escalated.

CRITICAL | CONTAINMENT VERIFICATION

Finding	Owner	Priority	Due	Evidence

Execution tip: Do not close the audit while an uncontrolled critical risk remains.

59 Set the follow-up date and confirm overdue actions escalate to department, store, food safety, quality, and operations leadership.

CRITICAL | FOLLOW-UP SCHEDULE + ESCALATION

Finding	Owner	Priority	Due	Evidence

Execution tip: Base the review date on risk and verify escalation recipients before submission.

60 Complete department manager, store manager, and audit reviewer approval with comments, open risks, timestamp, and signature.

CRITICAL | MANAGER + REVIEWER SIGN-OFF

NAME | Enter

TIME | __:__

SIGNATURE | Sign

Execution tip: Sign-off must state unresolved risks, interim controls, overdue actions, and the next review date.