SHOWHOW · CHECKLIST

Line Cook Station Setup

A line cook who starts service with a half-set station spends the rush running to the walk-in. This checklist is for cooks setting up a grill, sauté or cold station in a small restaurant kitchen. It covers what to check, what to prep and what to keep within reach, so the station looks the same no matter who sets it up. Add a photo of your finished station; it says more than the list.

What you'll need

- Prep list for your station
- Labels and a marker
- Clean towels and a sanitizer bucket
- Your station's tools

Steps

- [ ] **Wash your hands and put on a clean apron.**
  Tie back long hair and remove any jewelry your kitchen doesn't allow.

- [ ] **Read the prep list and the specials for your station.**
  Ask the chef about anything you don't know before you start.

- [ ] **Switch on your equipment so it's hot when you need it.**
  Grills and flat tops take 15 to 20 minutes. Check the fryer oil level and color.

- [ ] **Check what's left from yesterday before you prep more.**
  Check labels and dates, use the oldest first and follow your local food safety rules.

- [ ] **Prep in order of what takes longest.**
  Sauces and braises first, chopping and portioning next, garnishes last.

- [ ] **Hone or sharpen your knife before you start cutting.**
  A sharp knife slips less than a dull one.

  Watch out: Never try to catch a falling knife. Step back and let it drop.

- [ ] **Label every container with what's in it, the date and your initials.**
  Use the same label format as the rest of the kitchen.

- [ ] **Fill your cold drawers and inserts in the same layout every day.**
  Same place every time means you can reach without looking during service.

- [ ] **Set up backups of everything that runs out in a rush.**
  A second insert of your bestsellers in the walk-in or lowboy, ready to swap.

- [ ] **Put out your tools: tongs, spatulas, spoons, towels and a sanitizer bucket.**
  Mix the sanitizer to the strength on the product label, and change it during service.

- [ ] **Store raw proteins below and away from ready-to-eat food.**
  Use separate cutting boards and tongs for raw and cooked food.

  Watch out: Mixing up raw and cooked tools is how guests get sick. Color-coded boards help.

- [ ] **Taste every sauce and seasoning before service.**
  Use a clean spoon each time.

- [ ] **Tell the chef you're set, and what you're short on.**
  Do this at least 15 minutes before service so there's time to fix it.

How to adapt it

- Take a photo of a perfectly set station and add it to the last step.
- Write each station's par levels into its own version of this checklist.
- Use color-coded boards and labels if your kitchen has a color system.
- Add a separate breakdown checklist for the end of service.