

MID-Q1 RESTAURANT INVENTORY AUDIT CHECKLIST

This 5-step mid-Q1 inventory audit checklist helps operators quickly spot discrepancies, reduce waste, and implement stronger inventory controls—setting the restaurant up for healthier margins throughout the year.

STEP 1: SET THE AUDIT UP FOR ACCURACY (15–30 MINUTES)

Proper preparation ensures counts are accurate, comparable, and actionable. Clear ownership also improves accountability throughout the audit process.

- Schedule the audit outside of peak prep or service hours
- Pull recent sales reports, last inventory counts, and vendor invoices and credits
- Update your inventory master sheet with clear categories
- Assign responsibility by area (kitchen, bar, storage, non-food items)

Operator Tip: Inconsistent inventory units and shared ownership are the #1 cause of unusable inventory data.



STEP 2: COUNT AND VERIFY ALL INVENTORY

Separating food, beverage, and non-food items helps simplify variance tracking and budgeting. Prioritize accuracy on items that move fast or cost the most. Use the same counting method as prior audits.

- Food (proteins, produce, dairy, frozen items)
- Dry goods, spices, and seasonings
- Beverages (alcoholic and non-alcoholic)
- Smallwares, dining ware, linens, and uniforms
- Count using consistent units every time
- Double-check high-cost or fast-moving items
- Flag
 - Missing product
 - Unusually high usage
 - Excess on-hand inventory

Operator Tip: You don't need perfection everywhere—just precision where dollars are at risk.

STEP 3: COMPARE INVENTORY, SALES, AND WASTE

Estimating the dollar value of waste helps to determine where immediate fixes will have the biggest financial impact.

- Compare current inventory levels to recent purchase invoices
- Match theoretical usage to actual usage based on sales data
- Review waste logs or document spoilage and discarded items
- Identify trends like over-ordering, expired product, or low-selling menu items



STEP 4: ANALYZE USAGE, PORTIONS, AND INVOICES

Minor invoice discrepancies and portion creep can quietly erode margins if left unchecked.

- Verify portion sizes against recipes (weigh if needed)
- Observe prep and plating during service for inconsistencies
- Confirm staff are following standardized recipes
- Reconcile vendor invoices against purchase orders and deliveries
- Check for pricing changes, missing credits, or quantity errors

STEP 5: ADJUST PARS AND ASSIGN ONGOING ACCOUNTABILITY

Remember to update par levels based on actual usage and sales trends.

- Reduce pars for slow-moving or waste-prone SKUs
- Reinforce FIFO, dating, and storage standards
- Assign ongoing inventory owners by department
- Set weekly (key items) and biweekly (full) count cadence



FINAL REVIEW: LOCK IN ACCOUNTABILITY

- Document findings and action items
- Assign owners and deadlines for each action
- Share results with managers and key staff
- Schedule your next inventory review

