Restaurant Merchandise

Launch a small useful product line without burying cash in unsold stock



PRACTICAL GUIDE / WORKED EXAMPLES / EDITABLE TEMPLATES

Tools for independent restaurant owners and managers

Start with one practical change

Start with one product guests genuinely want, one approved design, and one small inventory decision. This toolkit covers product selection, supplier checks, pricing, preorders, staff presentation, and stock review. It does not cover food products, alcohol, children’s products, or product-safety certification. All quoted costs, selling prices, suppliers, and results in the examples are hypothetical. Financial examples exclude sales tax and require your actual fees and costs.

Inside this toolkit

1. Choose one product guests will use
2. Approve the sample and the supplier
3. Separate contribution from cash exposure
4. Use preorders with clear promises
5. Sell naturally and review the stock

Make the templates your own

Read the short guide, work through the example, and choose the forms you need. The printable forms follow the guide. The companion Word file lets you change instructions, add your restaurant name, and replace every blank or bracket before use. Duplicate a clean copy for each new shift, campaign, employee, or event.

The companion Excel workbook contains editable inputs and live formulas or planning fields. Read its instructions before changing values. Its hypothetical examples may use a more detailed set of assumptions than the guide. Use consistent units and cost definitions, and never treat contribution as full accounting profit.

Edition October 2026. Examples are original and hypothetical. This is an operating resource, not legal, employment, accounting, or food-safety advice. Confirm location-specific requirements and get qualified review where needed.

Choose one product guests will use

Merchandise works best when it fits an existing connection to the restaurant. A useful item with a recognizable design is easier to test than a large collection of logos on unfamiliar products. Begin with evidence: repeated guest requests, a popular existing design, or a small number of clearly recorded expressions of interest.

Product	Useful advantage	Main complication
Tote	One size and easy display	Fabric, construction, and print quality
Adult T shirt	Wearable reminder of the restaurant	Size mix, fit, and exchanges
Cap	Visible brand and compact storage	Fit, embroidery, and style preference
Sticker	Small checkout item	Low cash contribution and durability claims

- Ask a neutral question: “Which of these would you actually use, and what would stop you buying it?” Compliments are not orders.
- Show one or two designs, not a dozen. Record first choice and objections without collecting unnecessary personal details.
- Set a maximum cash exposure and storage limit before requesting bulk quotes.
- Avoid too many variants. Two colors across five sizes create ten stock-keeping units before a single item sells.

Hypothetical choice: Cedar Table tests an adult tote in one color after guests repeatedly ask about its illustrated storefront. It chooses a tote over shirts because there is no size inventory to predict. The owner treats 18 expressions of interest as a reason to order a sample, not as 18 guaranteed sales.

Use artwork you own or have permission to reproduce on merchandise. Confirm that a designer or stock-asset license covers the intended product use; paying for a design does not by itself tell you the license scope. Obtain permission when needed. (Source 1)

Approve the sample and the supplier

Compare suppliers using the same specification: product, material, dimensions, print method, colors, quantity, label requirements, packaging, destination, and deadline. A low unit quote is not comparable if it excludes setup, freight, or a different blank product.

- Request a physical sample when practical. Inspect construction, print placement, color, packaging, and any required labels. Photograph the approved version.
- Test normal use using the supplier’s care instructions. Do not make “dishwasher safe,” “organic,” “locally made,” or similar claims without appropriate support.
- Get the artwork proof, permitted print tolerance, defect handling, replacement process, minimum order, reorder terms, and expected lead time in writing.
- Confirm whether a quoted delivery date is a commitment or estimate. Allow time for sample approval and possible correction.
- Check who is responsible for applicable product labeling and safety documentation. A supplier’s reassuring email is not a substitute for verifying the requirements.

For US apparel and many textile items, FTC rules address fiber content, origin, and responsible-business identification; care-label obligations also apply to covered clothing. Ask the supplier which rules apply to the exact item and do not remove required labels to make room for your branding. (Source 2)

Hypothetical comparison: Supplier A quotes $9 per tote plus $100 setup and $60 freight for 40 units; Supplier B quotes $10 plus $80 setup and $40 freight. A costs $520 and B costs $520 before any other charges. The owner selects only after comparing the approved sample, lead time, and defect remedy, not the $9 headline.

Separate contribution from cash exposure

Calculate two things: the contribution from each sold unit and the cash committed to the whole order. Unsold stock can look harmless in a unit-margin calculation while consuming money you need for the restaurant.

Hypothetical tote inputs	Amount
Order quantity	40 units
Landed cost per unit including inbound freight	$11
Upfront sample and setup cost	$80
Retail price before sales tax	$24
Packaging and payment cost per sale	$1.50
Contribution per sold unit	$11.50

Contribution per sold unit = price − landed cost − per-sale costs. At 30 sales, contribution is 30 × $11.50 = $345; after the $80 setup, it is $265 before overhead and other excluded costs. That is not the same as cash recovered.

The full order and setup require $520 upfront: 40 × $11 + $80. Thirty sales bring in $720, with $45 selling costs, leaving $155 cash above that initial outlay. Ten unsold totes still tie up $110 at landed cost. This illustration assumes no returns, defects, discounts, or extra labor.

Cash payback units = upfront order cash ÷ (price − per-sale costs), rounded up. Here, $520 ÷ $22.50 means 24 sales are needed to recover the initial outlay. The separate setup-only contribution hurdle is $80 ÷ $11.50, rounded up to 7 units; do not confuse it with whole-order cash payback.

- Run a slow-sales case before committing. If only 15 sell, cash received after selling costs is $337.50, leaving $182.50 unrecovered.
- Add actual taxes that are your cost, returns, fulfillment labor, platform fees, and shipping subsidies as applicable. Use qualified accounting advice for tax treatment.

Use preorders with clear promises

A preorder can reduce demand uncertainty, but taking payment creates a fulfillment obligation. Begin with an unpaid interest list if you cannot yet give a reliable product specification or delivery plan. Clearly distinguish “interested” from “paid order.”

- Before accepting payment, approve the sample, confirm supply, set the order window, and write a realistic fulfillment date or window.
- Show the exact product, total price and applicable charges, size or dimensions, fulfillment method, and your reviewed cancellation, exchange, and refund terms.
- If a minimum production quantity is needed, say what happens if it is not reached and when customers will be told. Do not quietly replace a promised refund with store credit.
- Use your approved POS or ordering system. Keep payment credentials out of spreadsheets and paper logs.
- Assign one person to monitor supplier progress, answer questions, reconcile orders, and handle delays.

For covered US mail, internet, and telephone merchandise orders, the FTC requires a reasonable basis for the advertised shipping time; if none is stated, the rule generally uses 30 days. If shipment cannot occur on time, required delay-consent or refund procedures apply. Review the official guidance for your exact flow, including repeat delays. Do not assume a restaurant pickup arrangement has identical rules. (Source 3)

Hypothetical plan: Cedar Table first gathers interest, then approves a sample and confirms a supplier schedule. Its paid preorder clearly says when orders close, when pickup is expected, and what happens if production is cancelled. The manager checks progress before the promised date rather than waiting for guests to complain.

Sell naturally and review the stock

Merchandise should support the guest experience, not turn every table interaction into a sales pitch. Display one clean sample with a readable price and a simple way to buy. Keep sellable stock protected from food, grease, and handling damage.

- Create a separate POS item for each variant. Record discounts, staff-use items, samples, gifts, returns, and damaged units rather than letting stock disappear.
- Teach staff a brief factual answer: item, price, available variants, and how to buy. No pressure, invented scarcity, or claims that sales support a charity unless verified and approved.
- Offer a sample for inspection and use the actual size chart where relevant. Do not promise a fit or delivery date beyond the approved information.
- Count stock weekly during the pilot. Reconcile beginning stock + received + sellable returns − sales − gifts − damage = ending stock.
- Review contribution and cash recovery alongside guest questions, returns, and staff effort. High sales are less useful if exchanges absorb the margin.

Hypothetical review: after four weeks, Cedar Table sold 30 of 40 totes, a 75% unit sell-through for the original batch, with no returns. Ten remain. The owner does not automatically reorder another 40. It checks the recent weekly sales pace, upcoming demand, supplier lead time, and whether the original cash is recovered.

Set a reorder point from expected demand during supplier lead time plus a chosen buffer, then subtract stock already on order when planning a purchase. Treat the result as a planning estimate. If the first design stalls, improve the display or ask guests why before discounting every remaining unit.

Product selection worksheet

Compare no more than three ideas. A score organizes discussion; it does not turn compliments into demand. Set a score from 1 low to 3 strong and write the evidence.

Criterion	Idea A	Idea B	Idea C
Product and variant count	_____	_____	_____
Evidence of guest demand	_____	_____	_____
Fit with restaurant identity	_____	_____	_____
Ease of storage and fulfillment	_____	_____	_____
Sample quality and practical use	_____	_____	_____
Contribution at a plausible price	_____	_____	_____
Minimum order cash required	_____	_____	_____
Returns or sizing complication	_____	_____	_____

Selected first product and reason: _____
Guest evidence and date collected: _____
Maximum upfront cash exposure: _____
Maximum units and storage space: _____
Artwork owner and permission record: _____

Hypothetical decision: “One-color adult tote. Guests asked about the storefront illustration, one size reduces stock complexity, and a 40-unit batch fits our storage limit. Interest still needs testing.”

- Stop if the sample fails, product claims cannot be supported, artwork permission is unclear, or the order exceeds the owner’s limit.
- Decision owner: _____ Next review: _____

Supplier comparison and sample approval

Send an identical specification to each supplier. Include destination and desired delivery date. All quotations below should use the same currency and tax basis.

Specification or cost	Supplier A	Supplier B
Product material and dimensions	_____	_____
Print or decoration method	_____	_____
Quantity and variants	_____	_____
Unit production cost	_____	_____
Sample and setup charges	_____	_____
Freight and other charges	_____	_____
Total delivered order cost	_____	_____
Approval and production lead time	_____	_____
Defect remedy and deadline to report	_____	_____
Required labeling documentation	_____	_____
Reorder minimum and cost	_____	_____

Physical sample checks
Construction: _____ Print: _____ Color: _____
Normal-use test under care instructions: _____
Labels and packaging checked: _____
Approved proof file and version: _____

Selected supplier and evidence-based reason: _____
Unresolved questions before payment: _____
Sample approved by: _____ Date: _____

Hypothetical check: 40 × $9 + $100 setup + $60 freight = $520. A lower unit price does not guarantee a lower delivered order cost.

Cost and order plan

Complete before approving a purchase. Use one row per product variant in your companion calculator. Do not combine production setup with per-unit costs twice.

Input or calculation	Your figure
Quantity to buy	_____
Total production and inbound freight	_____
Landed cost per usable unit	_____
Separate upfront sample or setup	_____
Selling price before sales tax	_____
Per-sale packaging payment and fulfillment	_____
Contribution per sold unit	_____
Total upfront order cash	_____
Units for whole-order cash payback	_____

Sales scenario	Units	Cash recovered after per-sale costs
Slow case	_____	_____
Planning case	_____	_____
Full sell-through	_____	_____

Hypothetical check: 40 units at $11 landed plus $80 setup = $520 upfront. Selling at $24 with $1.50 per-sale costs needs 24 sales for cash payback. At 30 sales, cash received after per-sale costs is $675; the $155 difference is not the same as full accounting profit.

Returns and defect assumption: _____
Costs excluded and why: _____
Approved order quantity: _____ Approved cash limit: _____
Owner: _____ Review date: _____

Preorder and fulfillment planner

Use this as a planning form, not a legal terms document. Review the customer terms for your sales channel and location before taking money.

Customer-facing detail	Approved wording
Exact item variant and description	_____
Price and applicable charges	_____
Order opening and closing dates	_____
Minimum quantity if applicable	_____
Shipping or pickup date or window	_____
Where and how fulfillment occurs	_____
What happens if minimum is not reached	_____
Cancellation exchange and refund policy	_____
Delay contact and customer support route	_____

Preorder announcement draft
“Our [item] is available to preorder from [date] to [date]. [Description and dimensions or sizing]. Price: [price and charges]. [Shipping or pickup timing and method]. [Minimum-quantity condition if any]. Please review [terms location] before ordering. Questions: [contact].”

Internal checkpoint	Owner and date
Supplier schedule reconfirmed	_____
Paid orders reconciled with production quantity	_____
Delay review before promised fulfillment date	_____
Pickup or shipment completion reconciled	_____

Order records belong in your approved system. Reference IDs are enough for this worksheet; do not copy card details or full customer addresses into it.

Display and staff prompt sheet

Launch owner: _____ Launch date: _____ POS item tested: _____
One clean sample displayed at: _____

A natural guest prompt
“If you liked the [design], we also have it on a [product]. It is [price], and [available options]. You can take a look at the sample by [location].”

Answering a sizing question
“Here is the supplier’s size chart and our approved exchange information. I can show you the measurements, but I do not want to promise a fit.”

Answering a preorder question
“This is a preorder, not stock to take home today. The current [shipping or pickup] window is [window]. The full terms and contact details are [location].”

Answering an unavailable request
“That [variant] is not available right now. We do not have a confirmed restock date. [Offer the approved interest-list option only if one exists].”

Launch check	Owner and status
Price visible and consistent with POS	_____
Actual item and approved description shown	_____
Stock safely stored and counted	_____
Staff know returns and support process	_____
No unsupported material or origin claims	_____
Samples gifts and staff items tracked	_____

Questions staff could not answer: _____
Manager response and updated briefing: _____

Inventory and reorder review

Count the same day each week during the pilot. Use sellable returns separately from damaged returns. Investigate differences before changing stock records.

Stock movement	Units
Beginning sellable stock	_____
Receipts	_____
Sellable returns	_____
Sales	_____
Gifts samples or staff use	_____
Damage or loss	_____
Expected ending stock	_____
Physical count	_____
Unexplained difference	_____

Product and variant: _____ Period: _____ Counter: _____
Net sales after refunds: _____ Contribution estimate: _____
Original order cash recovered: _____ Unsold stock at cost: _____

Reorder input	Your estimate
Recent weekly sales pace	_____
Supplier lead time in weeks	_____
Chosen buffer units	_____
Current stock and units already ordered	_____
Proposed reorder quantity and cash cost	_____

Hypothetical review: 30 of the original 40 totes sold, giving 75% sell-through. Ten remain. Before reordering, compare recent demand over the supplier’s lead time with those ten units and any stock already ordered.

Decision: Reorder / Hold / Improve display / Discontinue
Reason and guest evidence: _____
Next review date and owner: _____

Sources and use notes

Official reference sources were checked during preparation in October 2026. Numbered source mentions in the guide refer to the entries below. Original worksheets, examples, and calculations are 63Labs planning tools, not material endorsed by these organizations.

Source 1 US Copyright Office How to Obtain Permission

Obtaining permission or a license for use of copyrighted work. Product and artwork rights need case-specific review.

https://www.copyright.gov/circs/m10.pdf

Source 2 FTC Apparel and Labeling

US textile identification and covered clothing care-label requirements. Exact applicability depends on the product.

https://www.ftc.gov/news-events/topics/tools-consumers/apparel-labeling

Source 3 FTC Business Guide to the Mail Internet or Telephone Order Merchandise Rule

Reasonable shipping promises and delay-consent or refund requirements for covered orders. Local pickup and other consumer rules require separate review.

https://www.ftc.gov/business-guidance/resources/business-guide-ftcs-mail-internet-or-telephone-order-merchandise-rule

Before use

Replace hypothetical values with verified restaurant data. Confirm responsibilities, approval limits, dates, offer terms, and local requirements. Do not send drafts, promise prices, or change operating procedures until the appropriate owner has approved them. The pack does not include legal contracts or ongoing updates.