

The 30-Day Restaurant Hiring Playbook



A week-by-week plan to go from short-staffed to fully scheduled

How to use this playbook

Work one week at a time. Each week has a short checklist you can actually finish between shifts. The goal by day 30: open roles posted everywhere candidates look, a screening process that filters for you, and a first-shift experience that keeps the people you hire.

Week 1 — Foundations (Days 1-7)

- ☐ List every role and shift you need covered for the next 90 days - including the ones you keep covering yourself.
- ☐ Write (or rewrite) each job description: what the shift actually looks like, pay or pay range, schedule, and one honest line about why people stay.
- ☐ Check your pay against what nearby restaurants are offering right now - candidates already know the going rate.
- ☐ Set up an online application that works on a phone and takes under 5 minutes. Every paper application you hand out is an applicant you lose.
- ☐ Pick one person per location who owns hiring: reviews applicants daily and schedules interviews.

Speed matters more in restaurants than in any other industry: hourly candidates typically take the first decent offer that responds. Everything in this playbook is built around responding faster.

Week 2 — Get in front of candidates (Days 8-14)

- ☐ Post every open role to the major job boards - if you post through software that syndicates automatically, this is one step, not five.
- ☐ Put a QR code linking to your application at the register, on the door, and on receipts. Walk-ins and regulars are pre-sold on your restaurant.
- ☐ Launch a staff referral bonus (paid half at hire, half at 60 days). Your best servers know other good servers.
- ☐ Post open roles on your restaurant's social accounts with a photo of the actual team.
- ☐ Re-contact good past applicants and former staff - a 2-line text is enough.

Week 3 — Screen fast, interview simply (Days 15-21)

	Add 3-4 knockout questions to your application: availability, weekend shifts, transportation, earliest start date.
	Respond to every qualified applicant within 24 hours, even if just to schedule.
	Run short structured interviews - same 5 questions for everyone (below), 20 minutes, at the restaurant.
	Check one reference with one question: "Would you hire them back?"
	Watch for the classic red flags: no availability overlap with your busiest shifts, vague reasons for leaving the last two jobs.

The 5-question restaurant interview

1. Walk me through your last busy shift - what was your station and what went wrong?
2. What does your weekly availability honestly look like?
3. Tell me about a coworker you liked working with and why.
4. What did you like least about your last job?
5. What would need to be true for you to still be here in a year?

Week 4 — Offer, onboard, keep (Days 22-30)

	Make offers the same week as the interview - by phone, then confirm in writing (role, pay, schedule, start date, who to ask for).
	Prepare the first shift before they arrive: paperwork ready, uniform or apron, POS login, and a named buddy for the shift.
	Schedule a 15-minute check-in at day 7 and day 30 - most hourly turnover decides in the first two weeks.
	Track three numbers per hire: days from posting to accepted offer, which board or source they came from, and whether they are still on the schedule at day 30.
	Keep the pipeline warm: leave evergreen applications open for your highest-turnover roles even when fully staffed.

Done monthly, the three numbers in that last checklist tell you exactly which boards to keep, which to drop, and whether your first-shift experience is leaking hires.