

# How to Open a Food Truck: Costs & Permits

Print this checklist and check off each step as you complete it.

## STEPS (10)

- Step 1: Validate Your Concept Before You Spend a Dollar**  
Your concept must survive two constraints: a tiny workspace and peak-time surges. Every food truck founder starts with a menu idea, but the business is selling that menu to enough people, fast enough, in the right locations, at a margin that covers mobile overhead.
- Step 2: Build Your Financial Model**  
Food truck financial projections are either absurdly optimistic or uselessly vague. Here is an actual cost model based on a single-truck operation in a mid-size U.S. metro, operating 5 days per week with lunch and dinner service.
- Step 3: Find Profitable Locations**  
Your food is maybe 30% of your success. Your location strategy is 70%. A mediocre taco served at a packed brewery on a Friday night will outsell the best taco in the city parked on a dead side street every single time.
- Step 4: Lock Your Commissary Kitchen**  
Your commissary kitchen is your second home. You will spend 2 to 4 hours there every morning prepping food before you drive to your vending spot. Choosing the wrong commissary or skipping one entirely is a business-ending mistake.
- Step 5: Navigate Permits and Inspections**  
Permitting is where most food truck dreams stall – not because it is impossible, but because it is confusing. There is no single "food truck license." You need a stack of permits from multiple agencies that often do not coordinate with each other.
- Step 6: Buy the Right Truck**  
Your rig must match your menu's heat, grease, power draw, and service style. The decision between truck, trailer, and cart will define your startup cost, operating flexibility, and revenue ceiling.
- Step 7: Design a Menu That Survives a Rush**  
Your menu is a production system, not a creative expression. It is an operations document that must deliver speed, cross-utilization, and margin under pressure.
- Step 8: Build Your Route, Events, and Catering Pipeline**  
Most profitable trucks use a blended revenue model: anchor stops for predictable weekday income, selective events for high-volume days, and catering as the highest-margin channel.
- Step 9: Get Insured**  
Food truck insurance is not optional and it is not simple. You need four separate policies, and that is more than most online guides tell you.
- Step 10: Launch and Optimize Your Route**  
Launch with metrics, not hope. Your first 90 days are a shakedown period where every operating day teaches you something about your concept, your route, and your numbers.

## NOTES

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**Read the full guide**

<https://advisedspaces.com/open/foodtruck>

Scan the QR code or visit the link for the complete guide.