Café Opening Checklist

Authorities, obligations and preparing the business in Malta

Before you start

This document is a template for cafés in Malta, not legal advice or an official approval. It is based on EU law and on the Maltese provisions verified for this template as of 24 October 2026: Regulation (EC) No 852/2004, Regulation (EC) No 178/2002, Regulation (EU) No 1169/2011, the Food Safety Act (Chapter 449) and the Catering Establishments Regulations (S.L. 409.15). Other national rules (temperature limits, the form of allergen information, medical or training certificates, VAT, fiscal receipts, alcohol, smoking) are not covered. Every business is different: adapt the template to your range, equipment and premises, add your details and check open points with the Food Safety and Security Authority.

Template for cafés in Malta, not legal advice. Law as of 24 October 2026. **Most of this template covers only the EU framework.** Maltese rules are included only where verified (registration under Chapter 449, catering licence under S.L. 409.15). National rules on temperatures, the form of allergen information, medical or training certificates, record retention, VAT, fiscal receipts, alcohol and smoking are not covered: check them with the Food Safety and Security Authority and the other competent authorities.

Steps in the usual order. Competent authorities, fees and deadlines are not covered in this template; check them with the authorities before you sign a lease or start building work.

1. Business set-up and licences

- ☐ Choose the legal form (sole trader, company ...) and discuss it with your accountant.
- ☐ **Food business registration**: no person may engage in a food business unless the person, the food business and the food premises are registered with and, where required, licensed by the Food Safety and Security Authority (Article 11(1) of the Food Safety Act, Chapter 449). Registered premises may be used only for the purpose for which they are registered or licensed (Article 11(2)).
- ☐ **Catering establishment licence**: the Catering Establishments Regulations (S.L. 409.15, Article 3(1)) require a licence issued by the Authority under the Malta Travel and Tourism Services Act before a catering establishment (restaurant, snack bar, bar, kiosk ...) operates. The text on Europaius is consolidated with amendments up to L.N. 290 of 2010: check the current version and the competent authority.
- ☐ Notification of each establishment to the competent authority for registration (Article 6(2) of Regulation (EC) No 852/2004).
- ☐ Tax and VAT registration, trade licences and alcohol licence: not covered here, check with your accountant and the competent authorities.

2. Premises

- ☐ Lease agreement allowing use as a café.
- ☐ Check with the planning authority that the premises may be used for catering, or apply for a change of use.
- ☐ Premises under Regulation (EC) No 852/2004, Annex II, Chapters I and II: hand-wash basin with hot and cold running water (separate from food washing where necessary), washing up, storeroom, place for cleaning products, staff toilet.
- ☐ Guest toilets, ventilation and fire safety: requirements depend on national and planning rules, check with the authorities.
- ☐ Lighting, washable surfaces, potable water.
- ☐ Waste collection arrangements.

3. Food hygiene

- ☐ HACCP procedures in place, see **HACCP Plan for a Café**.
- ☐ Cleaning and disinfection plan and house rules.
- ☐ Hygiene instruction or training of all food handlers, with a record (Regulation (EC) No 852/2004, Annex II, Chapter XII). Medical or training certificates under Maltese law: check with the Food Safety and Security Authority.
- ☐ Allergen list and allergen information on the menu.
- ☐ Thermometers in all chilling units, record sheets.

4. Till and prices

- ☐ Till system and card terminal. Rules on fiscal receipts and tax registers are not covered here: check with your accountant.
- ☐ Drinks menu with prices.

5. Other obligations

- ☐ Music on the premises: clarify rights and licences (also for radio and streaming).
- ☐ Liability and property insurance.
- ☐ Employees: employment contracts and written information on working conditions, social security registration, safety instruction. Maltese employment rules are not covered here.
- ☐ Outdoor seating on public space: permit and fees, check with the local authorities.
- ☐ Alcohol and smoking rules: check them before opening.

6. Coffee and equipment

- ☐ Choose the coffee and supplier, taste samples.
- ☐ Professional espresso machine (number of groups according to expected volume), espresso grinder, possibly a second grinder for decaf or filter.
- ☐ Water treatment: filter according to water hardness, hardness test.
- ☐ Barista equipment: tampers, jugs, scales with 0.1 g resolution, knock box, cloths, thermometers.
- ☐ Cleaning products for the espresso machine and grinder.
- ☐ Barista training: espresso and latte art.
- ☐ Set recipes and pricing.
- ☐ Service contract for the espresso machine.

7. The week before opening

- ☐ Soft opening for friends, espresso calibration, check of service speed.
- ☐ Check all temperatures and record sheets.
- ☐ Map listings, social media, photos, opening hours.
- ☐ Order the first coffee stock according to expected consumption.

Sources: Chapter 449 Food Safety Act, art. 11 (europaius.com/mt/z/53563); S.L. 409.15 Catering Establishments Regulations, art. 3 (europaius.com/mt/doc/sl-409.15-mlt); Regulation (EC) No 852/2004 (europaius.com/eu-akt/32004r0852). Status 24 October 2026.

Sources – full text of the legislation on Europaius

- 852/2004