Café Opening Checklist

Obligations and getting ready to trade in Ireland (EU framework and verified Irish points)

Before you start

This document is a template for cafés in Ireland, not legal advice or an official approval. It is based on EU law as of 24 October 2026 (Regulation (EC) No 852/2004, Regulation (EC) No 178/2002, Regulation (EU) No 1169/2011) and on the Irish allergen regulations for non-prepacked food (S.I. No. 489 of 2014). Other Irish rules are not covered. Every café is different: the operator adapts the template to the actual menu, equipment and layout, adds their own details and is responsible for following it. If in doubt, contact your competent food safety authority.

Template for cafés in Ireland, not legal advice. Status 24 October 2026. **The template covers the EU framework; Irish rules are included only where verified** (written allergen information under S.I. No. 489 of 2014). Registration with the food authority, temperature limits, food handler training rules, record retention, VAT, licensing of alcohol and smoking rules **are not covered** – check them with your competent food safety authority and other local authorities before you use the template.

The steps follow the usual order. Authorities, deadlines and fees are not covered – check them with your local authority, your competent food safety authority and your accountant. Items without a legal reference are practical recommendations, not legal obligations.

1. Business set-up and licences

- ☐ Legal form, registrations and tax – agree with your accountant.
- ☐ Alcohol licence and any other licences – check with the competent authorities (not covered in this template).

2. Premises

- ☐ Lease that allows use as a café; check the permitted use of the premises.
- ☐ Premises that meet Regulation (EC) No 852/2004, Annex II, Chapters I and II: wash-hand basin with hot and cold running water (separate from food washing where necessary), washing-up facilities, storage, cleaning products, staff toilet.
- ☐ Ventilation, lighting, washable surfaces, potable water.
- ☐ Fire safety: extinguisher, escape routes – check the requirements with the competent authorities.
- ☐ Waste collection in line with your local authority's rules.

3. Hygiene and food safety

- ☐ **Notify the establishment** to the competent authority for registration (Article 6(2) of Regulation (EC) No 852/2004); check how and when with your competent food safety authority.
- ☐ Procedures based on HACCP principles – see **HACCP Plan for a Café**.
- ☐ Cleaning schedule and house rules.
- ☐ Food hygiene training for all food handlers (Regulation (EC) No 852/2004, Annex II, Chapter XII); Irish training requirements to be checked.
- ☐ Written allergen information at the point of sale, in English (S.I. No. 489 of 2014, Regulations 4 and 5).
- ☐ Thermometers in every fridge and freezer, record sheets.

4. Till, prices and tax

- ☐ Till system, receipts, VAT and price display: Irish rules not covered – check with your accountant.
- ☐ Card terminal and till software to suit the café.

5. Other obligations

- ☐ Staff: contracts of employment, payroll registration, health and safety – check with an adviser.
- ☐ Music, outdoor seating on public space, signage, smoking and alcohol rules – check with your local authority and the competent authorities.
- ☐ Public liability and property insurance (recommended).

6. Coffee and equipment

- ☐ Choosing a coffee and supplier, tasting samples.
- ☐ Commercial espresso machine (number of groups to suit expected sales), espresso grinder, a second grinder for decaf or filter if needed.
- ☐ Water treatment: filter suited to your water hardness, hardness test.
- ☐ Barista kit: tampers, jugs, scales accurate to 0.1 g, knock box, cloths, thermometers.
- ☐ Cleaning products for the espresso machine and grinder.
- ☐ Barista training – espresso and latte art course.
- ☐ Drink recipes and pricing.
- ☐ Service contract for the espresso machine.

7. The week before opening

- ☐ Soft opening for friends, dialling in the espresso, checking service speed.
- ☐ Check all temperatures and record sheets.
- ☐ Maps listing, social media, photos, opening hours.
- ☐ Order the first stock of coffee based on expected consumption.

Sources: 852/2004 Articles 5 and 6, Annex II · S.I. No. 489/2014 Regulations 4 and 5. Status 24 Oct 2026.

Sources – full text of the legislation on Europaius

- 852/2004