

Staff Training Plan: a 12-point checklist with measurable indicators

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Checklist

Programas de formación para personal de restaurantes en Colombia: qué programa mide impacto real

Método probado en +8.400 restaurantes · 43 países

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QUICK VERDICT

A staff training plan works when it sets, for every position, the entry profile, competencies, hours, assessment and evidence, then tracks who stays and who gets promoted. Anything measured differently is course attendance, not training.

In Colombia the pressure is concrete: according to the ANDI Gastronomy Chamber, 44.4% of the openings posted by its member restaurants in 2022 were first jobs, people with no trade who someone has to make productive during the shift. The checklist below separates the improvised plan from the measured one in twelve points across design, delivery and measurement, each with its definition of DONE, its frequency and its owner.

My position allows no middle ground: a point without a verifiable completion criterion does not exist, however good it looks in the HR binder.

 **Checklist** Actionable checklist with a measurable “done” criterion per item · 16 min read · 2026-10-01

ANDI's Gastronomy Chamber counted 19,851 openings posted in 2022 by its member restaurant companies, and from a local economic development lens that is less a hiring headline than a training bill someone will pay, since every opening is filled by a person who has to become productive in the kitchen, on the floor or at the register.

The same statement profiles the newcomer: 37% enter the sector with only lower-secondary schooling, so the plan must start where people actually are, with standard recipes, basic register math and guest handling.

Under SDG 8, restaurants are one of the few doors into formal work for young people and women with little experience. Semana put formal employment in the Colombian food service industry at around 155,000 jobs in 2024, a base that holds or erodes depending on how many hires survive their first quarter.

Diego F. Parra and Masterrestaurant, technology partner of SATE Institute, start from an uncomfortable reading: training rarely fails for lack of courses, it fails because nobody defined what DONE means. In Colombia, Resolution 2674 of 2013 also requires hygiene training for food handlers; treat it as the floor of the plan, and check the current text with your local health authority when you consult the official source, since requirements vary by territory.

SIDE-BY-SIDE COMPARISON

Side-by-side: staff training plan

	IMPROVISED PLAN (MISTAKE)	MEASURED PLAN (RIGHT WAY): DEFINITION OF DONE · FREQUENCY · OWNER
□ 1. Entry profile per position (design)	✗ Everyone is hired and trained the same way.	✓ Done: a file per person with schooling, prior experience and first-job status, signed at hire. Frequency: every hire. Owner: general manager.
□ 2. Competency map per position (design)	✗ “Learn by watching.”	✓ Done: a written list of observable competencies per position (kitchen, floor, register, bar), each with its expected level. Frequency: every six months. Owner: chef and floor manager.
□ 3. Food-handling requirement (design)	✗ The certificate is filed and forgotten.	✓ Done: every handler current under the applicable rule and a documented ongoing plan. Frequency: monthly expiry check. Owner: owner or administrator.
□ 4. Hours inside the paid shift (design)	✗ Training on days off or “when there's time.”	✓ Done: monthly calendar with each person's training hours inside the shift, posted in the kitchen. Frequency: monthly. Owner: general manager.
□ 5. Designated in-house trainer (delivery)	✗ Whoever is free teaches their own version.	✓ Done: one trainer per area with a training script and scheduled time. Frequency: quarterly review. Owner: general manager.

	IMPROVISED PLAN (MISTAKE)	MEASURED PLAN (RIGHT WAY): DEFINITION OF DONE · FREQUENCY · OWNER
☐ 6. First two weeks of onboarding (delivery)	✗ A one-hour walkthrough, then straight to service.	✓ Done: a 14-day task list signed by the new hire and the trainer. Frequency: every hire. Owner: area lead.
☐ 7. Observed on-the-job practice (delivery)	✗ A talk in the empty dining room, never checked again.	✓ Done: one logged observation per person per week, corrected on the spot. Frequency: weekly. Owner: chef or floor manager.
☐ 8. Upselling and menu knowledge (delivery)	✗ Staff are told to “sell more” with no method.	✓ Done: every server explains the highest-margin dishes and pairings; average check per server compared before and after. Frequency: weekly. Owner: floor manager.
☐ 9. Practical assessment with a rubric (measurement)	✗ Passing means showing up.	✓ Done: on-the-job test against a leveled rubric. Frequency: end of each module. Owner: area lead.
☐ 10. Verifiable evidence per person (measurement)	✗ A group photo and a sign-in sheet.	✓ Done: digital record with competency, date, assessor and result, ready for Open Badges micro-credentials. Frequency: per module. Owner: general manager.
Retention and check-in conversations (measurement)	✗ The manager learns of the resignation when the person doesn't show up.	✓ Done: 90-day retention by cohort and one logged monthly conversation per person. Frequency: monthly. Owner: general manager.
Internal promotion and replacement cost (measurement)	✗ Trusted roles are always hired from outside.	✓ Done: internal promotions per semester and estimated cost of each replacement against the training budget. Frequency: quarterly. Owner: owner.

Put it to work in your restaurant: Restaurant courses and training →

What must be defined for each role before the first module?

Before the first module, every role needs a written entry profile, the competencies that make the person productive, practice hours, an evaluation method and the evidence that the person can now do the job alone.

Without those pieces, the plan is a class calendar. A line cook needs a portioning competency with grams per standard recipe, another for timed mise en place and one for first-in, first-out inventory rotation; a server needs error-free order taking, suggestive selling, table handover to the next shift and a check closed clean against the POS. Each competency carries its criterion of DONE, which is behavior observed on a real shift and never an exam grade.

And sequence matters: first the role that moves the most money in your operation (usually the hot line or the register), then the rest, because training competes for supervision hours nobody has to spare.

On-the-job training, scored with a rubric, not in a classroom

On-the-job training is the core of the plan, and it works only when an evaluator closes it with a rubric at the station. Gallup found in 2025 that 57 % of U.S. employees received training on the job, the most common form, which confirms what restaurants already know by heart: people learn at the pass, with tickets piling up, and very little in a room full of slides.

The trap is that this training usually falls to the most senior coworker, who teaches shortcuts along with the recipe. That is why I ask for a designated trainer at every station, with the printed recipe card and a four-level rubric, and why the trainee moves to the next module only after meeting the criterion unaided for two shifts in a row.

Whatever the trainer does not sign off does not exist for the plan, even if the person has spent weeks at that station.

The top 5 almost everyone misses, and what each one costs

Five checklist items fail in almost every review, and each carries a price the owner pays without seeing it on the income statement. The first is a recipe card with no gram weights, because a protein served a few grams heavy on every plate ends up on the supplier invoice at month end. The second is assuming the entry profile: someone who cannot read a standard recipe well repeats the mistake and turns it into waste.

Third, an untrained register; for example, if a new cashier comes up 20,000 pesos short per shift over 30 shifts, that is 600,000 pesos nobody budgeted. Fourth, one-day onboarding, so the person who quits in the first quarter walks away with those hours and forces you to pay for another hire.

The fifth is promotion with no path, which hands your best cook to a competitor over a pay gap smaller than what it costs to replace them.

Why does mentoring retain people better than another course?

Mentoring retains better because people stay where a manager tells them, on a fixed date, how they are doing and where they can grow, and another course does not answer that question.

Gallup measured it in 2025: among U.S. employees who had mentoring in the past 12 months, 48 % report high job satisfaction. In a separate study by the same firm, 42 % of those who quit voluntarily said their manager or organization could have prevented it. Picture the opposite scenario.

If nobody talks to the prep cook during the first quarter, he reads the silence as a dead end and takes the first offer down the street; you pay again for hiring and for weeks of low productivity at the station while the plate comes out different every shift. So the checklist requires a fifteen-minute monthly conversation, logged, that ends with a written commitment from both sides.

How to put the checklist into the restaurant's real routine?

The checklist lives in the routine when every frequency has an owner, and it dies when it hangs on the office wall.

The chef or floor manager reviews it daily in the ten-minute pre-shift, with a single item from the station that failed most the day before. The designated trainer signs off weekly on the competencies seen on a real shift, and the general manager checks those sign-offs every month against waste and cash variances. Each quarter the board, or the owner if there is none, decides promotions with that evidence on the table.

One scheduling detail moves attendance more than any incentive: people who study need modules at fixed hours, published with the shift schedule, so they never have to choose between their education and their job.

How to audit compliance with measurable evidence for each item?

Auditing the plan means asking, for each item, for evidence an outsider can review without taking anyone's word for it. For portioning, the evidence is a weigh log of sampled plates across two shifts;

for the register, a signed cash count with no variance; for service, a rubric-based observation by someone other than the trainer. Diego F. Parra sums it up in a rule Masterrestaurant built into its competency platform: a competency is recorded with date, evaluator and attached evidence, or it does not count.

I say this because I got it wrong for years, accepting the trainer's signature as enough proof and later finding whole stations passed out of courtesy between coworkers. Today the auditor picks a random competency approved that month and observes it again on shift; if it does not hold up, the module reopens and the trainer goes under review.

Which indicators an employability funder should ask for?

A funder should ask for retention and promotion, because attendance at modules does not prove quality employment.

The ANDI Gastronomic Sector Chamber attributes 66 % of the sector's job creation in 2022 to women, so a plan that retains and promotes has a direct gender effect worth measuring separately. Programs such as Acodres' Cocina Futuro, which according to Blu Radio has trained more than 100 young people a year for free since 2021, solve the entry point; the operator who takes them on has to secure the second half, the first year in the job.

Pressure is the same abroad: 77 % of U.S. operators say recruiting and retaining staff remains a significant challenge (National Restaurant Association, 2025). My recommendation is specific: tie the second disbursement to how many trained people are still employed, and better paid, after twelve months.

Top 5 points almost everyone misses (and what they cost)

Assessing by attendance (point 9) is the most repeated mistake. Nobody should pass a module without showing the skill on the job. For example, if a cook "passed" portioning by attending and plates every protein a few grams heavy, the dish drifts above the method's ceiling, a 32% food cost as the MAXIMUM, and that gap times every plate sold in a month pays many times over for the hour of assessment someone skipped.

Skipping the regular check-ins turns turnover into an unbudgeted fixed cost. In Mexico, CANIRAC describes industry segments with turnover of up

Top 5 points almost everyone misses (and what they cost) — in practice

to 180% a year, which means hiring and training the same position more than once within the year. For example, if each server replacement costs two weeks of onboarding pay plus a coworker's double shifts, a plan that ignores retention is funding a revolving door out of the register. Scheduling training on days off (point 4) looks

neutral and isn't.

Women generated 66% of food service employment in Colombia in 2022, per ANDI, and many carry care duties that keep them from attending outside working hours, so the plan trains whoever needs it least.

Top 5 points almost everyone misses (and what they cost) — key points

The fix is cheap: hours go inside the paid shift. On-the-job training is the most common form of training, received by 57% of U.S. employees in Gallup's 2025 data, but in a restaurant it often means no script and no supervision (point 7).

Suppose a prep cook learns stock rotation from a coworker who does it wrong: the error gets taught to the next hire, expired product shows up in monthly waste, and by the time the manager notices, the habit is the kitchen standard. Missing internal promotion comes from a fear owners share with each other: "if I train them, they leave." Some will, but many restaurant employees are young and studying, and a visible path is what keeps them.

The tension resolves with a career path, not less training, because a visible next step, prep cook to line cook or server to floor lead, gives people a reason to stay that pay alone doesn't.

POINT BY POINT

A/B analysis: improvised plan versus measured plan

PREVENTABLE TURNOVER

A · IMPROVISED PLAN (MISTAKE)

Resignations are written off as bad luck.

B · MASTERESTAURANT Every exit is

classified as preventable or not, with its cause and the missing skill.

Verdict: B wins. Gallup estimated in 2024 that 42% of U.S. voluntary leavers believed their manager or organization could have prevented it; classifying exits turns that share into a plan target.

RECRUITING VERSUS RETAINING

A · IMPROVISED PLAN (MISTAKE) More job ads every month, same one-hour onboarding.

B · MASTERRESTAURANT Budget shifts from recruiting toward training and keeping current hires.

Verdict: B wins. For 77% of U.S. operators, recruiting and retaining staff remains a significant challenge (National Restaurant Association, 2025), and keeping someone you already trained is the cheaper lever.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

A · IMPROVISED PLAN (MISTAKE) A report of hours delivered and group photos.

B · MASTERRESTAURANT Baseline, cohorts, certified competencies, retention and promotions.

Verdict: B, without debate: with no baseline nothing can be attributed to training, and no board or funder should approve a second cycle on an attendance report.

SIDE-BY-SIDE COMPARISON

What the improvised plan does **MISTAKE**

- ✗ Counts attendance.
- ✗ Treats the food-handling certificate as the whole training plan, so the inspection goes fine on paper while the crew still can't portion or rotate stock.
- ✗ Trains on days off.
- ✗ Lets each trainer teach a personal version of the dish, so the standard depends on who's on shift.
- ✗ Nobody talks to the new hire until they quit.

What the measured plan does

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- ✓ Defines DONE for each competency and checks it on the job with a rubric and a named assessor, so the certificate proves a skill rather than a presence.
- ✓ Hours inside the shift.
- ✓ Monthly logged check-ins.
- ✓ By cohort, it tracks 90-day retention and internal promotions and brings both numbers to the board with the cost of each replacement.
- ✓ One trainer per area.

THE NUMBERS THAT MATTER

The numbers behind a measurable training plan

44.4%

of openings at ANDI member restaurants
in Colombia were first jobs (2022)

37%

of people entering Colombia's food service
sector have lower-secondary schooling (2022)

19851

openings posted in 2022 by ANDI
member restaurant companies

155000

approximate formal jobs in Colombia's
food service industry (2024)

180%

maximum annual turnover in some
segments of Mexico's restaurant industry

77%

of U.S. restaurant operators say recruiting and retaining staff remains a significant challenge (2025)

42%

of U.S. voluntary leavers say their manager or organization could have prevented it (2024)

57%

of U.S. employees received on-the-job training, the most common form (2025)

66%

Restaurant staff training in Colombia: women's share of job creation in the food-service sector (2022)

48%

Share of U.S. employees reporting high job satisfaction among those who took part in mentorship in the past 12 months, a staff training plan component (2025)

over 100

Restaurant staff training in Colombia: young people trained free each year by Acodres' Cocina Futuro program since 2021

VISUALIZATION

The numbers, visualized

of openings at ANDI member restaurants in Colombia were first jobs (2022)



of people entering Colombia's food service sector have lower-secondary schooling (2022)



maximum annual turnover in some segments of Mexico's restaurant industry



of U.S. restaurant operators say recruiting and retaining staff remains a significant challenge (2025)



of U.S. voluntary leavers say their manager or organization could have prevented it (2024)



of U.S. employees received on-the-job training, the most common form (2025)



Sources: ANDI, Gastronomy Chamber (2023) · Semana (2024) · CANIRAC, El reto del talento en la industria restaurantera · National Restaurant Association (2025) · Gallup (2024)

Chart by masterrestaurant.com

ILLUSTRATIVE CASE (COMPOSITE)

“We ran four locations and trained everyone on their day off; once we moved training hours into the paid shift and started tracking 90-day retention by cohort, within two quarters we stopped posting the same prep cook opening every week, and our first new floor lead came from inside.”

— Operations manager of a four-unit casual dining group in Medellín, illustrative (composite) case

Composite case for illustration: the names and figures in it do not describe a real business and are not industry data.

HOW TO APPLY IT IN YOUR RESTAURANT

How to build a staff training plan step by step



Map entry profiles and competencies

In week one, build a file for each team member (schooling, experience, first-job status) and write, per position, the observable competencies that define good work. Start with kitchen and register, where a portioning or cash-count error shows up in money the same day.



Set the definition of DONE before the calendar

Diego F. Parra insists on this order: completion criteria first, hours second, because a full calendar without criteria only produces attendance. Then assign one trainer per area, put hours inside the paid shift and post the month in advance.



Assess on the job and log the evidence

Every module closes with a practical test against a rubric. Results are stored per person, with date, assessor and level, on a platform such as the one provided by Masterrestaurant, technology partner of SATE Institute, so each skill can become a verifiable micro-credential.



Measure by cohort and report to the board

Each month, calculate 90-day retention per hiring cohort, count internal promotions and estimate replacement costs. If retention doesn't improve after two cycles, revisit the last points of the checklist before buying more classroom hours.

FAQ

Staff training plan: frequently asked questions

What should a staff training plan include?

A staff training plan should include, per position, the entry profile, a competency map, hours inside the paid shift, a designated trainer, a rubric-based practical assessment, verifiable evidence and retention and promotion indicators. Any point without a definition of DONE records attendance, not training.

What are the best practices for restaurant staff training programs from external advisors?

The best practice is to have the external advisor build the measurement with you: entry profiles, observable competencies, on-the-job assessment and 90-day retention by cohort. Monthly check-ins matter too; according to Gallup (2024), 42% of U.S. voluntary leavers say their manager or organization could have prevented their departure.

How do you train restaurant staff on upselling menu items?

Train upselling at the table, not in a classroom: each server learns the highest-margin dishes and their pairings, practices while a supervisor observes, and is measured on average check before and after. Pair it with a mentor; in Gallup's 2025 data, 48% of employees mentored in the prior 12 months reported high job satisfaction.

Which companies offer training programs for restaurant staff in Colombia?

Colombia has public, trade-association and private options; SATE Institute, with Masterrestaurant as technology partner and Diego F. Parra's method, does not rank them by brand and recommends holding any program to this 12-point checklist. Ask whether it assesses on the job, issues evidence per person and tracks 90-day retention.

DATA & SOURCES

Staff training plan by the numbers (2026)

Verifiable industry benchmarks from official, non-commercial sources (government, industry associations, market research) - not competitors.

Metric	Value	Source
Restaurant turnover caused by difficult co-workers	28%	Toast — What Restaurant Workers Want in 2025
10-year average restaurant turnover	79.6% (promedio a ene-2024; 132% en 2020)	BLS JOLTS (via Toast)
Pre-pandemic turnover 2013-2019	71.6% anual promedio	BLS JOLTS (via Toast)
Workers planning to exit within 2 years	30% (2023)	Toast survey 2023 (n=1.011)
Bad manager as top churn factor	45% of those who quit cite it (2023)	Toast survey 2023
Hourly pay as exit reason	47% of short-tenure workers (2023)	Toast survey 2023

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