PETPOOJA

CHECKLIST

FSSAI Catering Checklist for Indian Event Kitchens

A caterer is the one food business the law will not let call itself small. You are excepted from the petty food business operator definition by name, you follow two Parts of Schedule 4 rather than one, and you are scored on a 47-question sheet written specifically for catering. This is that sheet, plus the problem no restaurant has: the event is at somebody else's address.

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47
Inspection Questions
The catering sheet, 114 marks

2
Schedule 4 Parts
Part II and Part V, not one

None
Registration Tier
A caterer needs a State Licence

₹10 lakh
No-Licence Penalty
And no imprisonment

0
Benchmarks Used
Your kitchen, not an average

01 The Licence a Caterer Actually Needs

Start here, because the shortcut every other small food business gets is closed to you by name.

Why you cannot register as a petty food business

✓ **The definition excepts a caterer in its own words** — Start Here

A petty food business operator is defined as one who manufactures or sells food himself, or a petty retailer, street food vendor, hawker, itinerant vendor, temporary stall holder or food truck, or who distributes foods including in any religious or social gathering, except a caterer. That middle limb describes a caterer's work exactly, and the clause then excepts a caterer from it. The stall holder at the same wedding can register. You cannot.

Regulation 1.2.1(4), FSS (Licensing and Registration of Food Businesses) Regulations 2011, as substituted by the Amendment Regulations 2026 notified 10-Mar-2026

✓ **And a caterer has no registration tier at all** — Costs Money To Get Wrong

This is where the exception bites. FSSAI's own Kind of Business table gives a Caterer two rows and neither is a registration: State Licence up to ₹50 crore at ₹5,000 a year, and Central Licence above ₹50 crore at ₹7,500 a year. The ₹100 registration that a food vending establishment or a stall holder can take up to ₹1.5 crore does not exist for you. It is a State Licence from the first rupee of turnover.

FSSAI/FoSCoS Kind of Business Criteria table, header [Updated on 01.04.2026], Caterer row

✓ **A tiffin service is a different row, and it does have one**

Distribution of packed meals, the tiffin or dabba model, is listed as its own Kind of Business and that row does carry a registration tier up to ₹1.5 crore. It is not the Caterer row and the two are not interchangeable, even though Schedule 4 Part V names both. Check which row your application is actually under before you pay a fee.

FSSAI/FoSCoS Kind of Business Criteria table, header [Updated on 01.04.2026], Caterer row

✓ **Your licence does not expire, and has not since March 2026** — Commonly Wrong

A licence or registration certificate is valid and subsisting unless suspended, cancelled or surrendered. The old renewal machinery was removed outright when regulation 2.1.7 was substituted on 10 March 2026, and the heading of that regulation changed from Validity and Renewal to Validity. If anyone is still selling you a renewal service with a deadline, check the date on their information.

Regulation 2.1.7(1), as substituted by the Amendment Regulations 2026 notified 10-Mar-2026

✓ **One premises, one licence, covering every activity at it**

FSSAI treats the licence as attaching to the premises, and a single licence may be issued for different establishments in the same local area. Your kitchen is the premises. What that means for the venue is section 05, and it is the question worth asking before a large event rather than after.

✓ **Display the licence number where it has to be seen**

Keep the certificate at the licensed premises and carry the number onto what you hand the customer. A caterer's number ends up on quotations and invoices rather than on a shopfront, so decide where it lives and keep it there.

> ### The two things most catering checklists still get wrong
>
> First, that an FSSAI licence has to be renewed before it expires. It does not expire at all any more. Second, that running without one risks six months in prison and a five lakh fine. The imprisonment was removed and the ceiling raised: it is a penalty which may extend to ten lakh rupees, and no imprisonment. Both changed, and both are still repeated almost everywhere, including by people selling compliance services. Check the date on any source that tells you otherwise.

02

The Sheet You Are Scored On

FSSAI publishes a different inspection checklist for each kind of food business. There is one for catering. These are its mechanics.

How the catering sheet works

✓ **47 questions, 114 marks, five sections**

The five are Design and facilities, Control of Operation, Maintenance and sanitation, Personal Hygiene, and Training and complaint handling. That is the catering sheet specifically, not the manufacturing one and not the retail one, and the sheet carries its own total at the foot: Total points ..... / 114. The same 47 questions reappear in the FSSAI Hygiene Rating guidance as Annexure 2A, near-verbatim.

FSSAI Regulatory Compliance Division, File No. 14(1)2016/Info/Enf/FSSAI dated 09-Mar-2018, CATERING inspection checklist

✓ **Some questions carry an asterisk, and an asterisk means automatic failure** — Decides The Visit

Fail an asterisked question and the result is Non-compliance regardless of what you scored everywhere else. You cannot make it up on volume. Find out which questions on the sheet are asterisked and treat those as the ones that decide the visit.

✓ **How a mark is actually awarded, and the one that surprises people** — Worth Knowing

Compliance scores 2, partial compliance 1, non-compliance 0. An asterisked question scores 4 for compliance and 0 otherwise. The one worth knowing: Not applicable or Not observed scores the SAME as full compliance, 2 marks, or 4 on an asterisked question, so a requirement that genuinely does not apply to you costs you nothing. And partial compliance is not available at all on an asterisked question, because those are treated as critical to food safety. An asterisked question is pass or fail.

FSSAI Regulatory Compliance Division, File No. 14(1)2016/Info/Enf/FSSAI dated 09-Mar-2018, CATERING inspection checklist

✓ **The grading bands**

Taken from the foot of the catering sheet itself: A+ is 100 to 114, A is 91 to 99, B is 77 to 90, and anything below 77 is Non Compliance. Note how little room there is between B and failure, because 77 of 114 is about two thirds. One caution if you go reading the wider document: its general preamble gives percentage bands instead, with Non Compliance below 50 per cent, which is a lower bar than the catering sheet sets for itself. Work to the numbers printed on the sheet you are actually scored on.

FSSAI Regulatory Compliance Division, File No. 14(1)2016/Info/Enf/FSSAI dated 09-Mar-2018, CATERING inspection checklist

✓ **Pest control is on the sheet twice, and only one of them is asterisked**

Having a pest control programme run by trained personnel, with records, carries 2 marks. Having no signs of pest activity or infestation on the premises, meaning eggs, larvae or faeces, carries 4 marks and an asterisk. The paperwork is worth two marks; the actual absence of pests can end the inspection on its own.

FSSAI Regulatory Compliance Division, File No. 14(1)2016/Info/Enf/FSSAI dated 09-Mar-2018, CATERING inspection checklist

✓ **Score yourself on it before anyone else does**

The sheet is published. Download it, walk your own kitchen with it, and write your score down with the date. Two self-scores a month apart tell you whether anything you changed actually held.

The Hygiene Rating Scheme is a different thing, and it is voluntary

You can enrol through your FoSCoS credentials and self-assess for a rating of 1 to 5. It is not the inspection above, it is not compulsory, and a rating lasts two years. Worth knowing so you do not confuse a voluntary rating exercise with a regulatory inspection, which is a confusion vendors are happy to leave in place.

03 Part II: The Baseline Every Licensee Follows

Schedule 4 Part II applies to all food business operators applying for a licence. It is the floor, and most of an inspection sits on it.

Premises and equipment

- ✓ **Floors in food preparation and food service areas drain properly**
  Sloped to drain, easy to clean, and where necessary easy to disinfect. Standing water on a kitchen floor is visible from the door and is one of the first things looked at.
  Schedule 4 Part II, FSS (Licensing and Registration of Food Businesses) Regulations 2011

- ✓ **Walls, doors and surfaces are smooth, non-absorbent and cleanable**
  No flaking paint or plaster. Doors the same. A surface that cannot be cleaned cannot be shown to be clean.

- ✓ **Equipment is positioned so it can be cleaned around, not just wiped on top**
  The gap behind and under equipment is where an inspection finds what the visible surfaces hide.

- ✓ **Water used in food preparation is of potable quality**
  Including the water used to wash vegetables, to make ice, and to rinse utensils after cleaning. Keep whatever evidence of quality your supply gives you.

Temperature and the cold chain

- ✓ **Receiving temperature for potentially high risk food is at or below 5°C**
  Part II sets this out for receiving. Check it at the gate, not after it is in the fridge, and write the reading down.
  Schedule 4 Part II, FSS (Licensing and Registration of Food Businesses) Regulations 2011

- ✓ **Frozen food is received at minus 18°C or below**
  If it arrives soft, it is a rejection decision, and the time to make it is while the vehicle is still there.
  Schedule 4 Part II, FSS (Licensing and Registration of Food Businesses) Regulations 2011

- ✓ **Control covers the whole run, not just the kitchen** Read This Twice
  Part II asks for control of time and temperature at receiving, processing, cooking, cooling, storage, packaging, distribution and food service up to the consumer, as applicable. For a caterer the last two words of that list are the hard part, which is section 05.
  Schedule 4 Part II, FSS (Licensing and Registration of Food Businesses) Regulations 2011

- ✓ **Thawed material is not refrozen**
  Part II asks for proper care so that defrosted material is handled safely. Decide what happens to anything that thaws in transit before it happens.

Pest control, waste and records

- ✓ **Pest control is carried out without putting the food at risk, and the records are kept**
  Records of pesticides and insecticides used, with dates and frequency. This is the 2-mark question on the inspection sheet; the 4-mark asterisked one is whether there are actually pests.
  Schedule 4 Part II, FSS (Licensing and Registration of Food Businesses) Regulations 2011

- ✓ **Disinfectants are used so they do not contaminate food or equipment**
  Right product, right dilution, right contact time, and not stored next to ingredients.

- ✓ **Waste does not accumulate in or next to food areas**
  Covered, removed on a schedule, and the bin area kept so it does not become the pest problem the asterisked question is about.

04 Part V: What Catering Adds On Top

Part V is written for catering and food service establishments, and it says in its own first line that it applies in addition to Part II.

What Part V covers, and who it names

✓ **Which text of Schedule 4 you are reading matters** — Read This First

The clauses quoted here are from Schedule 4 as notified in 2011, which is the text on the statute book. An amendment package covering Parts II, IV and V has been kept in operation by directions under section 16(5) of the FSS Act rather than by a fresh notification, and FSSAI's own inspection checklists describe themselves as based on a revised Schedule 4. What is asked of a catering kitchen is substantially the same either way, but clause numbers can differ. If an officer cites a number you cannot find, ask which version they are working from rather than arguing the number.

✓ **Part V applies in addition to Part II, not instead of it** — Both, Not Either

Its opening words are "In addition to Part-II the Catering/ food Service establishment…". A caterer therefore meets both. Part I, the lighter set, is for petty food business operators applying for registration, and section 01 is why that is not you.

Schedule 4 Part V, FSS (Licensing and Registration of Food Businesses) Regulations 2011

✓ **The businesses Part V names**

Eating houses; restaurants and hotels; snack bars; canteens in schools, colleges, offices and institutions; food service at religious places; neighbourhood tiffin services and dabba walas; rail and airline catering; hospital catering. If you cook for an event at a religious place, Part V names that directly.

Schedule 4 Part V, FSS (Licensing and Registration of Food Businesses) Regulations 2011

✓ **Cleaning between tasks, and especially after raw food**

Food areas and equipment are cleaned between different tasks, especially after handling raw food. For a caterer running several dishes through one kitchen in one morning, this is the clause that governs the order you work in.

✓ **Hands washed at the points Part V lists**

After breaks, after using the toilet, and after cleaning raw materials or utensils and equipment. Put the list on the wall at the basin rather than in a file.

✓ **Street shoes stay out of the food preparation area**

Part V says this in terms. It is the kind of clause that is obvious on paper and ignored in a rented kitchen on a busy morning.

✓ **Hot holding at or above 60°C, or refrigerate**

Part V puts prolonged storage in refrigerators or hot holding at or above 60°C. The gap between those two is where catering loses food, and it is the whole of section 05.

Schedule 4 Part V, FSS (Licensing and Registration of Food Businesses) Regulations 2011

✓ **No water added after cooking, reheating or boiling**

Part V says this plainly. It is aimed at the practice of thinning a gravy at the serving line with whatever water is to hand.

05 The Event Is Not Your Premises

Everything above assumes a kitchen you control. A caterer's food is finished, held and served somewhere else, and that is the part a restaurant checklist has nothing to say about.

Before you accept the booking

- ✓ **Ask what the venue's own position is, in writing, before a large event** — Ask, Do Not Assume
  Your licence attaches to your premises, and a single licence covers establishments in the same local area. Nothing read for this checklist says a caterer needs a separate licence for each venue, and nothing says the venue's own licence covers food you cooked elsewhere. That is genuinely unsettled on the published text, so do not assume either way. Put the question to your licensing authority or an FSSAI consultant before a large or unfamiliar event, and keep the answer.
  Regulation 2.1.5(1), FSS (Licensing and Registration of Food Businesses) Regulations 2011

- ✓ **Walk the venue before the day, not on it**
  Where is the water, is it potable, where does waste go, is there power for holding equipment, is there a surface you can work on, and where will food stand between arriving and being served. Every one of those is a Part II or Part V question that you cannot fix at 7pm.

- ✓ **Agree who is responsible for what, with the venue, in the contract**
  Crockery, service staff, the serving line, the waste. If the venue provides staff who handle food, Part V's personal hygiene requirements reach them too, and somebody has to have told them.

Transport and holding

- ✓ **Decide the holding method per dish before you load**
  Hot above 60°C or cold below 5°C. A dish that will be neither for two hours in a van is a dish to take off the menu or to finish at the venue.

- ✓ **Measure the temperature when it leaves and when it arrives**
  Two readings, written down, per journey. It is the only evidence you will have that the gap was controlled.

- ✓ **Keep raw and ready-to-eat apart in the vehicle as well as the kitchen**
  Separation does not stop at the kitchen door. A tray of raw marinade above a tray of finished salad in the van is the same offence as in the fridge.

- ✓ **Containers for transport are cleanable, covered and not used for anything else**
  Part II's rule that a utensil or container used for food is not kept where it can be contaminated applies to transport containers just as it does to kitchen ones.

- ✓ **Write down the time food left the kitchen**
  Hot holding has a limit in practice even when it is done correctly. Without a departure time nobody at the venue can tell how long a tray has been standing.

At the event

- ✓ **Nominate one person responsible for food safety on site**
  Named, present, and known to the team. Not the person running service, because they will be busy.

- ✓ **Check holding temperatures on arrival and then on a fixed interval**
  Pick the interval before the event and keep to it, on the same sheet you used at the kitchen.

- ✓ **Decide in advance what happens to food that falls out of temperature**
  The decision is easier made in the office than at the buffet with guests waiting. Write the rule down and give whoever is on site the authority to apply it.

- ✓ **Write down what was served, to roughly how many, and when** — Protects You
  Dish list, approximate covers, and the time service started and finished. If anyone reports illness in the days after, this is the first thing you will be asked for and the hardest thing to reconstruct from memory. It takes two minutes at the end of service and it is the record that protects you as much as it exposes you.

- ✓ **Agree who the single point of contact is if something goes wrong**
  One name and number, given to the host and known to your team, for anything from a complaint on the night to a question a week later. Scattered accounts of the same event are what turn a single complaint into an investigation.

- ✓ **Keep a sample of what was served where your state requires it**
  Several states require caterers at large gatherings to retain a food sample for a period after the event. Requirements differ by state, so confirm yours with your local food safety department rather than relying on a national rule.

06 The People Handling the Food

Part II's personal hygiene requirements, and the two places they touch employment practice.

Health and hygiene

- ✓ **Food handlers do not smoke, spit, chew, sneeze or cough over food, or eat in food preparation and service areas**
  Part II lists these in terms. It is also most of what an inspector sees in the first two minutes.
  Schedule 4 Part II, FSS (Licensing and Registration of Food Businesses) Regulations 2011

- ✓ **Nails and hair trimmed, and the obvious habits not practised while handling food**
  Part II says this directly. Put it in the induction rather than relying on it being obvious.

- ✓ **Anyone with a cut or an open wound does not handle food until it is covered**
  Suitably covered with a dressing that will stay on and is visible if it comes off.

- ✓ **Someone who is unwell is moved off food handling, and that is a rostering decision, not a disciplinary one** Handle Carefully
  Exclusion from food handling protects the food. Treat it as reassignment for the shift, say so in the staff handbook, and keep it separate from anything that affects pay or standing. If it does affect pay, that is an employment decision and should follow whatever process applies to that employee.

Training and records

- ✓ **Training is given, and reviewed rather than done once**
  Part II asks for training programmes to be routinely reviewed and updated where necessary. A certificate from three years ago with no refresher is a weak answer to a question about current practice.

- ✓ **Health records of food handlers are personal data, and medical details are sensitive**
  Keep medical fitness records to what the requirement actually needs, hold them where only the person who needs them can see them, and do not put a diagnosis on a roster or a notice board. Say in your staff handbook what you keep and why.

- ✓ **Keep the training record against the person, with dates**
  Who was trained, on what, when, and by whom. An inspection asks to see it rather than taking your word for the programme.

07

Records, Returns and What You Must Display

The paperwork that exists whether or not anyone is inspecting, and one display rule that catches caterers specifically.

What you file

✓ **A separate annual return for every licence you hold**

The regulation is explicit that a separate return is filed for every licence, irrespective of whether the same operator holds more than one. Two kitchens on two licences is two returns, not one.

Regulation 2.1.13(2), FSS (Licensing and Registration of Food Businesses) Regulations 2011

✓ **Daily production and raw-material records, with a proviso worth reading**

Condition of Licence 8 requires daily records of production and raw-material utilisation, with a proviso added in June 2026 that the condition does not apply to non-manufacturing food businesses. Whether a catering kitchen cooking at volume is non-manufacturing is not settled by the words themselves, so ask your licensing authority rather than deciding it for yourself. Keeping the records is the safer side of the question either way.

✓ **Keep the inspection sheet scores you give yourself**

Not required by anyone. It is the only way to show an improvement rather than assert one.

What you display and declare

✓ **Allergen information and the veg or non-veg mark, with no turnover threshold** No Threshold

For food service establishments the allergen declaration and the vegetarian or non-vegetarian logo apply with no threshold at all. A caterer serving a wedding is a food service establishment, so this reaches you at any size.

Regulation 9(2), FSS (Labelling and Display) Regulations 2020

✓ **The calorie declaration is a different rule, and usually not yours**

Calorific value per serving, with the 2,000 kcal line, is required of establishments holding a Central licence or operating at ten or more locations. Most caterers are outside it. Knowing which rule is which stops you being sold compliance you do not need.

Regulation 9(1), FSS (Labelling and Display) Regulations 2020

✓ **Put the allergen information where the guest can actually use it**

On the menu card, on the buffet label, or with the host if there is no printed menu. A declaration nobody at the event can see is not a declaration.

08 What It Actually Costs, Stated Correctly

The penalty most often quoted for operating without a licence has been wrong since 2023, and it is quoted wrongly almost everywhere.

The no-licence penalty

- ✓ **A penalty which may extend to ten lakh rupees, and no imprisonment** — Updated 2023

  Section 63 of the FSS Act was amended by the Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Act 2023. The earlier text, imprisonment up to six months and a fine up to five lakh rupees, was replaced. Anything still quoting prison time for operating without a licence is working from the pre-2023 text.

  Section 63, FSS Act 2006, as amended by the Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Act 2023, Schedule entry 35

- ✓ **Why the correction matters in both directions**

  It is not simply lighter. The financial ceiling doubled. A caterer who took comfort from a five lakh maximum is looking at twice that.

- ✓ **This is the penalty for operating without a licence, not a tariff for everything else**

  Other contraventions sit under their own sections with their own amounts. Do not read one number as the price of every mistake, and take advice on anything specific to you.

What an inspection can do short of a penalty

- ✓ **Non-compliance on the inspection sheet is a result, not a fine**

  It triggers what follows rather than being the end of it. The point of scoring yourself first is to never find out what follows.

- ✓ **A licence can be suspended, cancelled or surrendered**

  Since licences no longer expire, those three are now the only ways one stops being valid. That makes suspension the thing to avoid rather than a renewal date to remember.

> **This checklist is general guidance, not legal advice**
>
> Food safety law is enforced by state food safety departments and the detail varies between states, particularly on sampling at large gatherings and on what a venue is expected to hold. Confirm anything that affects a licence, a penalty or a large booking with your licensing authority or an FSSAI consultant before you rely on it.

09 The Pre-Event Walk-Through

One pass through the kitchen and one through the venue. Twenty minutes each, done the week before rather than the morning of.

In your kitchen, the week before

- ✓ **Score yourself on the catering inspection sheet and write the number down**
  47 questions. Note which asterisked ones you would fail today, because those are the only ones that can end a visit on their own.
- ✓ **Check the fridge and freezer readings against 5°C and minus 18°C**
  Reading, date, who checked. If a unit has been drifting, the week before an event is when you can still do something about it.
- ✓ **Look behind and under the equipment, not at it**
  The asterisked pest question is about signs of activity, and the signs are never on the front of the range.
- ✓ **Confirm every food handler on the event has current training and is fit to handle food**
  Both, recorded, before the roster is fixed.

At the venue, before the day

- ✓ **Water, waste, power, work surface, holding space**
  Five things. If any one is missing, it changes the menu or the method, and you want that decision made early.
- ✓ **Decide where food will stand and how it will be held**
  Per dish, hot or cold, and for how long. Anything that fits neither is the dish to change.
- ✓ **Name the person responsible on site and tell them the rules they are enforcing**
  Including what to do with food that falls out of temperature, and the authority to do it.
- ✓ **Put the allergen information in whatever form the event will actually use**
  Printed card, buffet labels, or briefed to the host. Decide which, before the day.

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This checklist is provided by Petpooja for informational purposes. Verify all compliance details with official sources before acting.

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THE SAME CHECKS, EVERY EVENT

A checklist nobody runs is *a checklist nobody runs*

Petpooja Tasks carries 150+ pre-built industry templates and AI auto-review with photo and video proof, so a temperature check or a pre-event walk-through comes back with evidence attached rather than a tick. Geofencing and geotagging confirm a check was done at the venue rather than in the van. Reminders go out on WhatsApp in 7 supported languages, and one plan covers unlimited users, which matters when half your event staff are on for one day. Ask for a walkthrough against the pre-event list in section 09.

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