

COVID-19: Frequently-Asked Questions for May 1, 2020, Restaurant Reopening

Issued April 28, 2020

Iowa restaurants have a responsibility to take measures to prevent the further spread of COVID-19. The [Governor's Proclamation of Disaster Emergency issued on April 27, 2020](#), allows restaurants in all counties **except** the following to resume limited on-premises dining service effective 5 a.m. on May 1, 2020, until 11:59 p.m. on May 15, 2020: Allamakee, Benton, Black Hawk, Bremer, Dallas, Des Moines, Dubuque, Fayette, Henry, Iowa, Jasper, Johnson, Linn, Louisa, Marshall, Muscatine, Polk, Poweshiek, Scott, Tama, Washington, or Woodbury.

RQ1: Is a restaurant required to physically remove tables or booths?

A: If a facility is unable to remove tables or booths to ensure a minimum of six feet between guests, tables or booths which are not available for seating guests must be identified by signage.

RQ2: Is a restaurant required to take an employee's temperature before allowing the employee to enter the facility?

A: This is strongly encouraged. Anyone with COVID-19 symptoms must be excluded from work. This is a reasonable public health measure that a restaurant can implement.

RQ3: What social distancing strategies should I use?

A: Do not allow guests to congregate in waiting or bar areas. Design a process to ensure guest separation while waiting to be seated. This can include adding floor markings, enforcing social distancing outside the restaurant, having customers wait in cars, etc. Consider also using a facility exit separate from the main entrance, in addition to the main entrance. Predetermine traffic paths to/from restrooms to limit proximity for guests and staff.

RQ4: Can a restaurant located in a mall or food court allow guests to utilize common seating in malls, food courts, or in other venues where there is normally common seating?

A: Common seating areas outside restaurant dining rooms remain closed. Restaurants that utilize only common seating (e.g., food courts) may continue to offer carry-out and delivery options only.

RQ5: Can restaurants refill customer beverages?

A: Refilling beverages at the table or from common containers (e.g., pitchers, carafes, decanters, bottles, kettles, etc.) is strongly discouraged. We recommend using clean glassware to provide customer refills.

RQ6: Can a bowling alley or other entertainment venue with a restaurant reopen for on-premise dining?

A: Bingo halls, bowling alleys, pool halls, arcades, and amusement parks remain closed to the public. The restaurant area of the facility may reopen for on-premises dining in accordance with the proclamation. However, non-dining activities must remain closed to the public, including but not limited to bowling, pool, darts, arcade games, amusement devices, and other games of skill or chance.

RQ7: Can a restaurant allow customers to use pool tables, dartboards, arcade games, amusement devices, and other games of skill or chance?

A: No, the use of these items by the public continues to be prohibited in the governor's proclamation.

RQ8: Can a restaurant provide live music and dancing?

A: We strongly advise against this practice. The governor's proclamation requires restaurants to implement reasonable measures to ensure social distancing of employees and customers, increased hygiene practices, and other public health measures to reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19.

RQ9: Can a bar or brewery tap room partner with a mobile food unit or restaurant, or utilize restaurant delivery options to allow on-premises dining along with alcohol sales?

A: No, bars must remain closed to the public, except for carry-out and delivery only. For the purposes of this order, a bar is an establishment where a customer may purchase alcoholic beverages and in which the serving of food is incidental to the consumption of those beverages and is limited to the service of ice, snack foods, and the reheating of commercially prepared foods such as frozen pizza, pre-packaged sandwiches, or other prepackaged, ready-to-serve products.

RQ10: Can a restaurant within a golf course clubhouse reopen to on-premises dining?

A: Restaurants within golf course clubhouses and other social and fraternal clubs may reopen to the public for on-premise dining, provided clubhouse activities and other club activities remain closed and the restaurant operates in accordance with the governor's proclamation.

RQ11: Since restaurants are not allowed to conduct self-service food or beverage operations, are grocery and convenience stores also prohibited from offering self-service food and beverage operations?

A: Grocery and convenience stores are not mandated to cease customer self-service operations. We advise that each operation assess self-service and consider discontinuing self-service beverages. We further advise selling food that has been wrapped or placed in individual containers only.

RQ12: The governor's proclamation states restaurants must limit the number of customers present in indoor or outdoor spaces to 50 percent of its normal operating capacity to ensure adequate spacing of groups. How is "operating capacity" defined or interpreted?

A: Operating capacity means the maximum number of individuals able to be seated for use by restaurant patrons on the premises, which may include indoor and outdoor seating areas. Fifty percent operating capacity includes customers seated for on-premise dining service, as well as customers waiting within the indoor and/or outdoor seating areas for carry-out orders.

RQ13: How much distance do we need between restaurant tables?

A: The restaurant must ensure at least six feet of physical distance between each group or individual diner.

RQ14: What if my family group is larger than six members? Will we be permitted to be seated together in a group larger than six people?

A: No. Group seating is limited to six or fewer guests. Groups greater than six people could be divided into smaller groups consisting of six or less individuals. The groups should expect to maintain a social distance of at least six feet between groups while in the restaurant.

RQ15: If my racetrack/speedway includes a concession stand where food is prepared and served, may I open the concession stand to serve food even though I am not permitted to reopen the speedway or racetrack to permit spectators to attend an event in person.

A: Yes, the concession stand would be permitted to open for service to attending race drivers and race crew members providing appropriate social distancing measures and guidance are implemented. General public customers could be served as long as entry into the event is not required, and proper social distancing measures and guidance are followed. If practical, general public service may be limited to curbside carry-out at the speedway or race track location, or delivery.

RQ16: If I own or operate a licensed juice or health drink bar within a gymnasium, fitness center, or health spa, can I reopen this space to serve customers?

A: Yes, however, the juice/health drink bar area would be included within the proclamation, which limits the number of customers to 50 percent of the maximum legal occupancy capacity of the gym, fitness center, or health spa. Appropriate social distancing, hygiene, and public health measures must be implemented.

RQ17: May I offer preset tables, which may include tableware, utensils, cups/glasses, table tents, menus, salt/pepper shakers, napkin dispensers, condiments (e.g., ketchup, mustard, barbecue sauce), or other similar items?

A: We strongly discourage offering preset tables. As an alternative, you should consider offering pre-wrapped single-use tableware, single-service condiments (e.g., packets of salt, pepper, ketchup, mustard, mayo) or other single-use items (e.g., napkins) upon customer request or delivery of the meal to the dining table/booth. If offered for use, multiple-use tableware or glassware should be placed at the table/booth as guests are seated and must be cleaned and sanitized between each customer.

RQ18: Can a restaurant allow dining customers to remain on premises and order additional beverages, including alcoholic beverages, after the completion of their meal?

A: While it may be common practice for diners to socialize after the meal, we advise restaurants to closely monitor this practice, establish limits, and inform customers of limitations.

RQ19: Are restaurants allowed to serve customers that are only ordering alcoholic beverages?

A: The governor's proclamation allows restaurants to resume on-premises dining. If customers are only ordering alcoholic beverages, they are not dining. We strongly advise restaurants to only service alcoholic beverages to customers who are ordering and consuming food.

RQ20: Can a restaurant utilize seating at the bar to serve customers food?

A: To the extent possible, seating at bars within restaurants should be eliminated. When determining if seating at the bar will be allowed, social distancing between customers and employees must be considered.

RQ21: Can a restaurant be open for on-premise dining during hours when food is not offered? For example, if the kitchen hours are from 4-9 p.m., can the restaurant be open to the public for beverage service until 11 p.m.?

A: No, once food can no longer be ordered or consumed on premise, a restaurant, for the purposes of the proclamation, meets the definition of a bar and must be closed to the public. They can continue to offer carry-out or delivery for beverages but are not allowed to be open to the public.

RQ22: What type of disinfectants can be used for tables, chairs, and other non-food contact surfaces following customer use?

A: Prior to disinfecting surfaces, these surfaces should first be cleaned (i.e., removal of germs, dirt, and impurities from surfaces). Cleaning does not kill germs, but removing them from surfaces lowers their numbers and the risk of spreading infection. An EPA-registered disinfectant effective for use against SARS-CoV-2 (the virus which causes COVID-19) is recommended. The EPA's list of disinfectants for use against SARS-CoV-2 can be found online: [Disinfectants for Use Against SARS-CoV-2](#). EPA-registered disinfectants must be appropriate for the surface to which it is being applied, and must be applied in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions on the label.

RQ23: How frequently should I disinfect commonly touched surfaces in my facility used both by customers and employees (i.e. door handles, credit card machines, bathrooms, and etc.)?

A: The FDA and CDC both recommend cleaning frequently-touched surfaces as often as possible. The Iowa Department of Inspections and Appeals and Iowa Department of Public Health, to the extent practical, strongly recommend disinfecting commonly-touched surfaces **at a minimum of at least hourly**; however, if practical, it may be necessary to disinfect such surfaces more frequently.

RQ24: If I need to post signage on the entrance of my food establishment restricting customer access due to a consumer customer exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19, are there specific requirements for the signage (i.e., the size of sign or text on sign, and information or content printed on the sign)?

A: There are no requirements regarding size, format, size of text, or content of signage; however, each establishment operator is strongly encouraged to consider the following when posting signage for customers: (1) Signage should be placed where it can be easily be seen by customers; (2) signage should be large enough for customers to identify and read the posted content (3) text should be appropriately sized and be legibly typed or printed for the customer to read; (4) signage in multiple languages should be considered, if necessary; and (5) signage should include information about particular COVID-19 symptoms. The CDC has identified the following symptoms to watch for on their website: fever, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, chills, repeated shaking with chills, muscle pain, headache, sore throat, and new loss of taste or smell. Please check the CDC's website for [symptoms of coronavirus](#).

RQ25: Are my restaurant employees or customers required to wear masks?

A: No there are no issued mandates for employees and/or customers to wear protective face masks or other personal protective equipment (PPE). Each establishment operator should consider enforcing their own mitigation practices and/or strategies to protect their employees and customers from the spread of COVID-19. Such mitigation strategies may include the wearing of a protective face mask, face shield, or other applicable PPE. Employees with direct customer contact would be of greatest concern. **Disposable mask are recommended.** However, if cloth masks are worn they should be changed as frequently as necessary, or at least laundered and replaced daily. FDA has issued guidance related to employees in retail food and food production settings wearing face coverings to prevent exposure to COVID-19 (posted April 4, 2020). The FDA's guidance regarding this practice can be accessed online: [Food Safety and the Coronavirus Disease \(COVID-19\)](#).

RQ26: Is my restaurant permitted to use reusable menus?

A: It is strongly recommended to discourage the use of reusable menus. If used, each reusable menu should be disinfected between each customer with an EPA-registered disinfectant effective against the COVID-19 virus. It is recommended instead to use single-use paper menus, and to discard them after each use. Alternatives such as stationary menu boards, electronic menus, or mobile device downloadable menus should be considered.

RQ27: Can individual packages of condiments such as ketchup, mustard, mayonnaise, relish, hot sauce, barbeque sauce, dipping sauces, salt, and pepper be served to a consumer be reused if they are unopened or unused?

A: It is strongly recommended once served to a customer, unopened or unused individual condiment packages not be served to new customers.