

Restaurant Manager interview questions

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What to expect

Restaurant Manager interviews mix questions about how you run the numbers with questions about how you handle people, whether that's staff, suppliers or difficult guests. Expect the panel to probe both your operational discipline and your composure under service pressure.

- **Behavioural:** Past examples of handling staff conflict, complaints or high-pressure shifts, usually assessed with STAR.
- **Financial/operational:** Questions on rostering against labour cost targets, food cost control and margin management.
- **Scenario/judgement:** Hypothetical service failures or staffing gaps where the panel wants to see decision-making under pressure.
- **Customer-facing:** How you handle escalated complaints or reputation issues, including online reviews.
- **Compliance/safety:** Food safety, RSA and workplace health and safety knowledge relevant to running a licensed venue.

Most interviews open with a walk-through of your current or most recent role and venue type, move into two or three behavioural or scenario questions, then spend time on numbers (labour cost, food cost, budgeting) before finishing on availability, right to work and questions for the panel.

1. Walk me through how you build a weekly roster and control labour costs against trading patterns.

Why they ask

This is core to the role and tests whether you actually use data rather than habit to schedule staff.

How to structure your answer

Walk-through structure: describe the inputs you use, the steps you take to build the roster, and how you check the result against target before the week starts.

Example answer

"I start with the previous few weeks of sales data broken down by hour and day to see where covers actually land, then I overlay any known events or bookings. I roster core staff against the busiest windows first and build casual shifts around the gaps, checking the projected labour cost percentage against target before I finalise it. If it's over, I'll look at trimming overlap shifts or shifting a start time by half an hour rather than cutting cover during peak."

2. Tell me about a time you had to resolve a serious customer complaint.

Why they ask

Reputation and repeat business depend on how managers handle escalations, so the panel wants a real example, not a policy statement.

How to structure your answer

STAR: situation, task, action, result.

Example answer

"A table complained that their mains arrived cold after a long wait during a busy Saturday service. I went to the table myself, apologised, remade the dishes on priority and comped their drinks while they waited. I also followed up by phone a few days later after they'd left a review, which they then updated to reflect the resolution. It became a talking point in our next team briefing about ticket times during

peak.”

3. How do you monitor food costs and menu margins, and what do you do when a dish is underperforming financially?

Why they ask

Tests financial literacy and whether you can translate cost data into action rather than just reporting it upward.

How to structure your answer

Process explanation with a concrete example of a decision you made.

Example answer

“I reconcile supplier invoices against theoretical food cost each month using the POS sales mix report, then flag any dish where actual cost has drifted from menu price. When a pasta dish's margin slipped because a supplier raised prices on a key ingredient, I adjusted the portion slightly and swapped a garnish for a cheaper alternative rather than raising the price straight away, which protected the margin without the guest noticing a change.”

4. A senior staff member calls in sick an hour before a fully booked Friday dinner service. What do you do?

Why they ask

Scenario question testing judgement under pressure and staffing contingency thinking.

How to structure your answer

Judgement-under-pressure structure: state your immediate priority, the options you'd weigh, and the decision you'd make and why.

Example answer

“My first priority is coverage for the sections that were relying on that person's experience, so I'd check who's available on call or willing to pick up extra hours, and I'd personally move into a support role on the floor if needed rather than just directing from the pass. I'd also brief the remaining team quickly on any changes to section coverage so nobody's caught out mid-service, and flag to the kitchen that front-of-house pacing might need to adjust.”

5. How do you approach training new front-of-house or kitchen staff on service standards?

Why they ask

Staff turnover is high in hospitality, so the panel wants to know your onboarding is structured, not ad hoc.

How to structure your answer

Process walk-through with an example of how you'd measure whether training worked.

Example answer

“I run new starters through a structured first week: shadowing an experienced staff member, a walk-through of the menu and any allergen information, and a supervised shift before they're rostered solo. I check in after two weeks to see how they're tracking against service standards and give specific feedback rather than general praise, which has cut down on early resignations in venues I've managed.”

6. What's your understanding of your food safety and RSA obligations as a manager in this venue?

Why they ask

Compliance question checking you understand the regulatory responsibilities that sit with the manager, not just the certificate holder.

How to structure your answer

Direct knowledge check: state the relevant obligations and how you apply them day to day.

Example answer

"As the manager I'm responsible for making sure the food safety program is actually followed, not just documented, so I do regular temperature checks and stock rotation audits and keep records ready for council inspection. On the RSA side I make sure staff serving alcohol are certified and I back them up when they need to refuse service to an intoxicated guest, since that decision shouldn't fall on a junior staff member alone."