



PROOF Presents

Tennessee Main Street Restaurant Week

Community Playbook + Launch Guide



PROGRAM GUIDE

Welcome!

Thank you for participating in the inaugural Tennessee Main Street Restaurant Week!

We are excited to partner with Tennessee Main Street communities across the state to celebrate the incredible restaurants, cafés, coffee shops, bakeries, breweries, food trucks, caterers, and specialty food businesses that make our downtowns vibrant destinations.

Restaurant Week is more than a week of dining specials - it is an opportunity to strengthen local businesses, increase downtown visitation, encourage entrepreneurship, and showcase the unique character of Tennessee's Main Street communities.

This initiative is presented through a partnership between Tennessee Main Street, the Tennessee Department of Economic & Community Development (TNECD), and Proof Programs as part of a statewide effort to support food and beverage businesses and promote downtown economic development.

This guide is designed for Tennessee Main Street communities to lead Restaurant Week locally using a simple, repeatable framework. Included templates and assets reduce custom work while preserving local identity and statewide brand consistency.

We look forward to working alongside you to make Restaurant Week a signature annual event that benefits businesses, residents, and visitors alike.

**Best regards,
Proof Programs**



WELCOME

How to use this guide

Tennessee Main Street Restaurant Week is a statewide initiative designed to help communities celebrate local food and beverage businesses, increase downtown visitation, and support entrepreneurship.

Guiding Principle

This guide was designed to make Restaurant Week easy to implement. Everything needed to plan, market, and execute a successful Restaurant Week has been organized into simple steps. Communities are encouraged to adapt these resources to fit their local identity while maintaining the statewide Tennessee Main Street Restaurant Week brand.

What this guide gives you:

- A simple launch timeline from announcement through follow-up
- Restaurant recruitment guidance and sample copy
- Marketing campaign structure and content prompts
- Week-of execution checklists
- Reporting tools to capture results and improve next year
- Clear boundaries around what communities lead and what Proof provides as optional support



RESTAURANT WEEK AT A GLANCE

Restaurant Week is not just a dining promotion. It is a coordinated economic development campaign that uses food and beverage businesses to activate downtowns, attract visitors, and tell a stronger Main Street story.

1. Recruit

Invite restaurants, cafes, bakeries, bars, breweries, food trucks, caterers, and specialty food businesses.

2. Register

Collect details through the community interest form: contact, logo, photos, website, socials, and planned offer.

3. Prepare

Encourage participating restaurants to select a special, plan staffing, review marketing assets, and attend webinars.

4. Promote

Use the included social, email, press, and print templates to build excitement.

5. Celebrate

During Restaurant Week, share daily content, visit businesses, and encourage community participation.

6. Measure

Gather photos, feedback, participation numbers, and success stories.



THE CORE PHILOSOPHY

Proof designs the system. Communities lead the execution.

Restaurant Week works best when the local community owns the event. Proof provides the framework, templates, training resources, and optional technical assistance. Local Main Street teams lead the relationships, invitations, and execution.

Community Leads

- Restaurant invitations
- Local partner coordination
- Restaurant registration follow-up
- Local promotion
- Week-of community engagement
- Photos and success stories
- Post-event feedback

Proof Provides

- Launch framework
- Template emails
- Marketing assets
- Press release copy
- Webinar outlines
- Restaurant guidance
- Optional technical assistance

Important Positioning

Avoid positioning Proof as the event planner. The guide and templates are designed so each community can implement Restaurant Week confidently and independently.



ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

Use this page to clarify expectations early.

Main Street Director

- Invite restaurants and partners
- Share the interest form
- Promote the campaign locally
- Coordinate local logistics
- Share assets with businesses
- Encourage participation
- Collect final feedback

Restaurants

- Confirm participation
- Create a featured item, menu, or experience
- Promote participation
- Share photos and customer stories
- Train staff
- Welcome new customers
- Complete follow-up survey

Local Partners

- Help spread the word
- Share posts and newsletters
- Offer meeting space or sponsorship
- Support media outreach
- Encourage residents to dine locally

Proof / Statewide Team

- Provide the guide and templates
- Create statewide brand assets
- Offer webinars and resources
- Provide optional technical assistance for participants
- Support broader Restaurant Week messaging

TIMELINE AT A GLANCE

Use this simple schedule to stay on track.

July

- Announce statewide initiative.
- Share interest form.
- Begin restaurant recruitment.

August

- Confirm participating restaurants.
- Collect logos, photos, websites, and social handles.
- Prepare businesses.
- Encourage webinars.

September

- Collect menu specials and feature ideas.
- Launch marketing push.
- Release restaurant list.
- Share spotlights and countdowns.

October 5-11

- Celebrate Tennessee Main Street Restaurant Week!

November

- Survey restaurants.
- Share success stories.
- Report results.
- Begin planning next year.



QUICK START CHECKLIST

THE FIRST 10 THINGS TO DO.

- Assign one local Restaurant Week coordinator
- Create or confirm your restaurant contact list
- Send the restaurant recruitment email (provided)
- Share the community interest form (provided)
- Create a simple tracking spreadsheet (provided)
- Confirm a restaurant registration deadline
- Post the statewide announcement graphic (provided)
- Notify tourism, chamber, and city communications partners
- Schedule one reminder email per week until the deadline (templates provided)
- Begin collecting logos, photos, and menu/special ideas



RECRUITING RESTAURANTS

Recruitment should be personal, simple, and low-pressure. Restaurants should understand that participation does not require a discount or complicated menu.

Who to invite:

- Restaurants and cafes
- Coffee shops and bakeries
- Breweries, bars, and distilleries
- Caterers and food trucks
- Specialty food producers
- Ice cream, dessert, and snack shops
- Pop-up and emerging food entrepreneurs

Keep it Simple

Participation should be easy: a featured dish, limited-time special, chef item, coffee flight, dessert sampler, signature drink, family meal, or behind-the-scenes experience all count.

RESTAURANT RECRUITMENT SCRIPT

Use this for calls, visits, or quick emails.

Short Script:

We are participating in Tennessee Main Street Restaurant Week this October and would love to include your business. The goal is to celebrate local restaurants, drive traffic downtown, and highlight the people behind our food and beverage community. Participation can be as simple as offering a featured menu item or a special during the week. We will provide marketing materials and help promote participating businesses.

Questions to ask:

- Would you like to participate?
- What menu item, special, or experience would you like to feature?
- Do you have a logo and photos we can use?
- Who should receive Restaurant Week updates?
- Would you like information about the free business resources available through this initiative?

RESTAURANT REGISTRATION PROCESS

Each participating community should use a simple interest form to collect restaurant details. Keep the form short so busy operators can complete it quickly.

Recommended Form Fields:

- Business name
- Owner or manager name
- Email and phone
- Physical address
- Website and social media links
- Business category
- Logo upload
- Photo upload
- Featured item, menu, or promotion
- Dietary notes or accessibility details
- Permission to promote business and submit images

Best Practice

Use one form per community. This makes it easier to track local participation, create local pages, and report results after the campaign.

[Template Form](#) (Make a copy of this form for your community)

BUILD YOUR RESTAURANT LIST

The tracking sheet is your command center.

After businesses complete the interest form, click RESPONSES, then VIEW IN SHEETS. This will create a spreadsheet and will help you manage communications and marketing assets.

orm | 2026 TN Restaurant Week

Questions Responses Settings

Restaurant Interest Form | 2026 TN Restaurant Week

Welcome

Thank you for your interest in participating in **Tennessee Main Street Restaurant Week!**

Restaurant Week is a statewide initiative celebrating the incredible restaurants, cafés, bakeries, breweries, coffee shops, food trucks, caterers, and specialty food businesses that make our downtowns unique.

Please complete this brief form so we can include your business in promotional materials and communicate important information leading up to Restaurant Week.

5 TN Restaurant Week

Questions Responses Settings

0 responses

View in Sheets

No responses yet. Please check back later.

WHAT COUNTS AS A RESTAURANT WEEK OFFER?

Restaurant Week does not have to be discount-driven. Encourage restaurants to choose something that reflects their brand and protects margins.

- Featured entree
- Limited-time appetizer
- Chef special
- Prix fixe menu
- Coffee or cocktail flight
- Dessert sampler
- Family meal bundle
- Local ingredient feature
- Behind-the-scenes tasting
- Cooking demonstration
- Kids meal special
- Brunch feature
- Happy hour pairing
- Retail product bundle
- Gift card promotion

Rule of Thumb

The best offer is one the restaurant can execute well, promote clearly, and repeat if it works.

HELPING RESTAURANTS SUCCEED

Support without overcomplicating.

Restaurants are busy. The most helpful thing a community can do is give them simple prompts, clear deadlines, and ready-to-use materials.

Send restaurants this weekly prep list:

- Choose your Restaurant Week offer
- Take 3-5 good photos
- Share the event on Facebook and Instagram
- Train staff on the offer
- Invite your regular customers
- Collect customer emails during the week
- Post at least once per day during Restaurant Week
- Complete the post-event survey

Keep Participation Operator-Friendly

Avoid asking restaurants to do complicated reporting, deep discounts, or custom events unless they choose to.

MARKETING STRATEGY OVERVIEW

The campaign should feel consistent statewide but local in personality. Use the official Restaurant Week brand while highlighting your community voice.

Announcement

- Restaurant Week is coming.

Recruitment

- Restaurants are invited to participate.

Reveal

- Participating restaurants are announced.

Spotlight

- Restaurants and owners are featured.

Countdown

- Menus, specials, and reminders are shared.

Live Week

- Daily content drives visits and community engagement.

ALL MARKETING ASSET LINKS

- [Restaurant Week Logos](#)
- [Restaurant Week Announcement](#)
- [Restaurant Week Guide](#)
- [Restaurant Week is LIVE](#)
- [Restaurant Recruitment](#)
- [Restaurant Spotlight](#)
- [Restaurant Week Generic Graphics](#)
- [Restaurant Reveals](#)
- [Restaurant Week Brand Book](#)
- [Restaurant Week Passport](#)

SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGN PLAN

Use the included Canva templates and captions. Customize with local photos, business names, and community details.

Pre-Launch Posts Restaurant Week Posts - MORE IDEAS

- Save the date
- Restaurant recruitment
- Why participate
- Behind the scenes
- Community pride
- Restaurant list coming soon
- Daily restaurant spotlight
- Menu feature
- Owner quote
- Customer photo
- Tonight in downtown
- Last chance reminder

Suggested hashtags:

#TNMainStreetRestaurantWeek #EatLocalTN #SupportMainStreet
#ExperienceTennessee
#[CommunityName]RestaurantWeek



EMAIL + NEWSLETTER PLAN

Email is one of the easiest ways to move people from awareness to action. Use your Main Street newsletter, chamber list, city communications, and tourism partners.

Suggested email schedule:

- Announcement: Restaurant Week is coming
- Recruitment: Restaurants are invited to join
- Reveal: Participating restaurants announced
- Countdown: One week until Restaurant Week
- Daily: Where to eat today
- Final: Last chance to participate
- Thank You: Celebrate businesses and share results

Email Rule

Each email should include one clear call to action: register, make a plan, visit a restaurant, share a post, or complete the survey.

[Email Templates](#)

PRESS + MEDIA OUTREACH

Local media can help position Restaurant Week as a community celebration and economic development initiative, not just a list of restaurant specials.

Media angles:

- Local restaurants as small business anchors
- Downtown revitalization through food and beverage
- Tourism and visitor spending
- Entrepreneur stories
- Family-owned business features
- New restaurant openings or expansions
- Restaurant Week as a statewide Tennessee Main Street initiative

Send media:

- Press release
- Participating restaurant list
- High-quality photos
- Interview contacts
- Event dates and website link

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IDEAS

Restaurant Week can be simple or layered. Start with restaurant participation, then add optional community engagement elements if capacity allows.

Simple Ideas

- Restaurant passport
- Photo contest
- Gift card giveaway
- Mayor proclamation
- Restaurant spotlight series
- Downtown dinner plan

Higher-Capacity Ideas

- Coffee crawl
- Dessert trail
- Live music and dining night
- Chef demo
- Food truck rally
- Progressive dinner

Capacity Reminder

Choose one or two enhancements. Do not overbuild the event in year one. A focused, well-promoted Restaurant Week is better than a complicated one.

OPTIONAL EVENT ENHANCEMENTS

Communities that want to build more activity around Restaurant Week can add one simple experience.

Enhancement Menu:

- Opening night kickoff with participating restaurants
- Restaurant passport with prize drawing
- Downtown dining guide or printed map
- Live music paired with dinner hours
- Coffee and bakery morning campaign
- Family night with kid-friendly restaurant options
- Local ingredient or farm-to-table feature
- Social media challenge: post your plate

Restaurant-Friendly Planning

- If adding an event, keep it supportive of restaurants rather than adding extra burden to their teams.

RESTAURANT SUCCESS CHECKLIST

- Confirm hours for Restaurant Week
- Confirm offer or special
- Submit logo and photos
- Post participation announcement
- Update website or menu page if applicable
- Print and display Restaurant Week signage
- Brief staff on menu, dates, and customer questions
- Prepare enough inventory
- Take photos during the week
- Collect customer emails if possible
- Complete post-event survey

WEEK-OF EXECUTION CHECKLIST

During Restaurant Week, your job is to keep the energy visible.

Daily Main Street Tasks

- Post one restaurant feature
- Share restaurant stories
- Visit or check in with businesses
- Repost customer photos
- Remind residents where to find details
- Thank participating restaurants

Daily Restaurant Tasks

- Post today's feature
- Share customer photos
- Remind staff of the promotion
- Invite guests to return
- Tag Main Street and partners
- Celebrate positive feedback

Week-of Goal

The campaign should feel active every day. Even one post and one story per day can keep momentum going.

DAILY POSTING PROMPTS

Monday

- Kickoff: Restaurant Week starts today. Here is where to eat.

Tuesday

- Restaurant spotlight: Feature one business and its offer.

Wednesday

- Meet the owner or chef: Share a short story.

Thursday

- Menu moment: Feature a dish, drink, dessert, or special.

Friday

- Weekend reminder: Make your Restaurant Week plans.

Saturday

- Community celebration: Share photos, customer posts, and downtown energy.

Sunday

- Last chance and thank you: Celebrate restaurants and invite feedback.



MEASURING SUCCESS

Simple reporting helps show value to restaurants, sponsors, partners, and statewide leadership. Do not make reporting complicated.

Track these core metrics:

- Number of participating businesses
- Number of community partners involved
- Social media reach and engagement
- Press mentions
- Website visits or QR scans
- Restaurant feedback
- Customer feedback
- Photos and success stories
- Optional: sales increase or customer count estimates

Impact Tip

Photos, testimonials, and stories often communicate impact better than numbers alone.

WE WILL PROVIDE FOLLOW UP SURVEYS

Proof will provide survey links for Main Street Directors, Participating Restaurants, and Community Feedback to help improve this initiative for years to come!



SURVEYS + FEEDBACK

Send short surveys immediately after Restaurant Week while the experience is fresh.

Restaurant Survey Questions

- Did Restaurant Week increase visibility?
- Did you see new customers?
- Was your offer easy to execute?
- What marketing helped most?
- Would you participate again?
- What should change next year?

Community Survey Questions

- Which restaurants did you visit?
- How did you hear about the event?
- Did you try a new business?
- Would you participate again?
- What would improve the experience?
- Any favorite moments?

MAKE IT ANNUAL

The first year creates the foundation. The second year is where Restaurant Week can grow into a recognizable community tradition.

After year one:

- Save your restaurant list and partner list
- Document what worked and what did not
- Keep the same week each year if possible
- Add one new feature next year, not five
- Use photos and testimonials from year one in recruitment
- Begin sponsor conversations earlier
- Consider awards or people's choice voting

Long-Term View

Restaurant Week should become easier each year because the system, templates, and community awareness are already built.

DOWNLOADABLE TOOLKIT INDEX

The guide stays simple. The assets live in the toolkit. Use this index to organize your shared folder.

- Restaurant invitation email
- Restaurant confirmation email
- Community announcement email
- Press release template
- Social media graphics
- Poster and flyer
- Restaurant registration form
- Restaurant survey
- Community survey
- Marketing calendar
- Restaurant checklist

TEMPLATE: RESTAURANT INVITATION EMAIL

Subject: You're Invited to Participate in Tennessee Main Street Restaurant Week

Hello [Restaurant Name],

We are excited to invite you to participate in Tennessee Main Street Restaurant Week, taking place October 5-11.

This statewide campaign celebrates local restaurants and encourages residents and visitors to eat local, support Main Street, and experience Tennessee.

Participation is simple. You may offer a featured menu item, limited-time special, prix fixe menu, signature drink, dessert, coffee flight, or any creative promotion that showcases your business. Discounts are not required.

If you would like to participate, please complete the interest form by [deadline]: [insert link].

We would love to highlight your business as part of this community-wide celebration.

Thank you,

[Name]

TEMPLATE: COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENT

Use this copy for newsletters, websites, or social media.

Tennessee Main Street Restaurant Week is coming October 5-11! Our community is joining Main Street communities across Tennessee to celebrate the restaurants, cafes, bakeries, breweries, food trucks, caterers, and specialty food businesses that make our downtown unique.

Throughout the week, participating businesses will offer featured items, specials, and experiences that invite residents and visitors to dine local and support Main Street.

Stay tuned for participating restaurants, menu features, and ways to join the celebration.

Sample Social Caption:

Save the date! Tennessee Main Street Restaurant Week is October 5-11. Get ready to eat local, support Main Street, and experience the food businesses that make [Community Name] special. Participating restaurants coming soon!

NEED ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE?

Restaurant Week is community-led; specialized support is available if needed.

This toolkit is intentionally designed so communities can launch Restaurant Week independently. However, communities may request additional technical assistance for specialized needs.

Optional areas of support may include:

- Food and beverage recruitment strategy
- Proof Match AI restaurant recruitment support
- Downtown market analysis
- Community branding and messaging
- Restaurant coaching
- Entrepreneur ecosystem development
- Stakeholder facilitation
- Developer engagement
- Business accelerator programming

Eat Local. Support Main Street. Experience Tennessee.

Reminder: The goal is to create a repeatable, sustainable Restaurant Week that communities can confidently lead year after year.



STAYING CONNECTED

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Learn more about Proof's resources for Main Street communities: www.proofincubator.com/tnmainstreet



Thank you for being part of this statewide effort to build vibrant, resilient Main Streets through food and beverage.
