Food & Beverage Audit-Readiness Checklist

A practical, no-panic checklist for supplier, QA, logistics, and finance documentation control

Let's start with a quick "audit fire drill!" Imagine a customer, internal or external auditor, or regulator asks for the document trail behind one supplier, one ingredient, or one shipment before your coffee gets cold. Could your team find the right certification, COA, allergen statement, BOL/POD, invoice record, approval history, and latest specification without digging through inboxes or calling the person who "knows where everything is"?

Now check what you already have in place. Every unchecked item is not a failure—it is a practical clue pointing to where document automation, better indexing, or stronger workflow control can reduce audit scramble and day-to-day friction.

Supplier documentation control

- ☐ Single system of record for supplier certifications, COAs, allergen statements, specifications, and insurance documents.
- ☐ Supplier documents are indexed consistently by supplier, ingredient/SKU, facility, document type, effective date, and expiration date.
- ☐ Certifications and insurance expirations are tracked automatically with alerts, such as 90/60/30-day notifications.
- ☐ Missing required supplier documents are visible in a completeness view instead of requiring manual searching.

QA, traceability, and production records

- ☐ Batch, lot, and traceability records are linked to the relevant product/SKU and retrievable without tribal knowledge.
- ☐ Inspection reports, sanitation logs, and QA records are stored with version history and an audit trail.
- ☐ Records retention policies are defined and applied consistently across QA and compliance content.

Version control and approvals

- ☐ Only the current approved version of specifications, labels, and packaging documents is available for use; prior versions are clearly marked superseded.
- ☐ Approvals are workflow-based, not email-only, with who/when/what recorded automatically.
- ☐ A complete audit trail can be demonstrated for critical documents, including approvals, revisions, and access.

Retrieval speed and audit response

- ☐ A complete document set can be produced within hours, not days: supplier → ingredient → product → lot/batch → shipment.
- ☐ Teams can find documents by supplier, product/SKU, lot/batch, date range, and location using search instead of folder navigation.
- ☐ Who has access and what changed can be answered using an auditable log.
- ☐ Shipping documents, including BOL, packing slips, and POD, are linked to orders/shipments for customer, claim, or audit response.

Quick scoring

- 8-10 checked: Strong audit posture.
- 5-7 checked: Good foundation; likely bottlenecks under pressure.
- 0-4 checked: High audit disruption risk; prioritize centralization and automation.

Fastest improvements

- Centralize supplier documents with standardized indexing and ownership, including who validates, who renews, and who approves.
- Enable automated expiration alerts for certifications and insurance to eliminate spreadsheet tracking.
- Apply version control and controlled distribution for specifications, labels, and packaging artifacts.
- Automate invoice intake and approval routing so AP focuses on exceptions, not manual entry.
- Digitize paper archives and legacy compliance records so historical documentation becomes searchable and governed.

Final Thought

Your score provides a snapshot of audit readiness today—but the real test is what happens when someone needs critical records immediately.

"Records must be available within 24 hours after a request by FDA, unless FDA agrees to a longer timeline." — U.S. Food & Drug Administration, *Food Traceability Rule At-A-Glance*

If an auditor, regulator, customer, or business partner requested supplier certifications, QA records, traceability documentation, shipping records, or compliance documents tomorrow, could your team locate and produce them with confidence?

Organizations that centralize and automate document management do more than improve compliance—they reduce operational risk, improve responsiveness, and gain confidence that critical information is available when it matters most.

Want help closing the gaps?

Request a Food & Beverage workflow review. IDT will map how supplier, QA, logistics, and AP documents enter your organization today and identify the fastest path to centralized control, expiration tracking, and audit-ready retrieval.

Request a Workflow Review