

ServSafe Alcohol Cheat Sheet 2026

The night-before summary, built like the exam.

40 Questions	— Time limit	75% Passing score
\$30 Exam fee	National Restaurant Ass... Governing body	

Exam at a Glance

- 40 questions on the Primary Exam.
- Pass mark: 75% — you must answer at least 30 of 40 correctly.
- Certification is recognized for 3 years, then you re-certify.

Quick math: $30/40 = 75\%$, so missing 11 or more questions fails.

Responsible Alcohol Service — Core Rules

Checking ID

- Accept only a valid, unexpired, government-issued photo ID: driver's license, state ID card, passport, or military ID.
- Expired ID = not acceptable, even with a photo.

Signs of Intoxication (memorize these)

- Slurred speech
- Impaired balance
- Glassy or bloodshot eyes
- Lowered inhibitions or aggressive behavior

When you observe these signs, stop service — they are the trigger for cutting a guest off.

Sobering Up — The Trap Question

- You can offer food and water, but only time lowers blood alcohol concentration (BAC).
- Coffee, food, water, and fresh air do not speed up sobriety — this is a classic exam distractor.

Dram Shop Liability

- An establishment can be held legally liable for injuries caused by a patron who was served while visibly intoxicated or who was a minor.
- Takeaway: refusing service protects both the guest and the business from liability.

Food-Safety Numbers Often Bundled with ServSafe

If your version includes food-safety items, these are the must-remember figures:

- Temperature danger zone: 41°F–135°F (pathogens grow fastest here).
- TCS food in the danger zone: discard after 4 hours total.
- Two-stage cooling: 135°F → 70°F within 2 hours, then 70°F → 41°F within 4 more hours (6 hours total).

Minimum Cooking Temperatures

- Poultry & stuffed items: 165°F for 1 second.

- Ground meat: 155°F for 17 seconds.

Holding Temperatures

- Hot TCS food: 135°F or higher.
- Cold TCS food: 41°F or lower.

Personal Hygiene & Contamination

- Handwashing: designated sink, at least 20 seconds, soap + warm running water.
- Exclude from food work when a handler has vomiting, diarrhea, or jaundice, or is diagnosed with Salmonella, Shigella, E. coli, Hepatitis A, or Norovirus.
- Prevent cross-contamination: separate raw from ready-to-eat foods, use separate equipment, clean and sanitize surfaces.

The "Big 9" Allergens

Milk, eggs, fish, shellfish, tree nuts, peanuts, wheat, soy, and sesame.

Last-Minute Recall List

- 30/40 = 75% = pass; valid 3 years.
- ID must be government-issued, photo, unexpired.
- Cut off at any intoxication sign; document it.
- Only time sobers a guest.
- Serving the visibly intoxicated or minors = dram shop liability.

Official sources

- U.S. Food and Drug Administration — FDA Food Code 2022: <https://www.fda.gov/media/164194/download?attachment>
- National Restaurant Association (ServSafe) — ServSafe Alcohol — Program Overview and Exam Formats: <https://www.servsafe.com/ServSafe-Alcohol>
- National Restaurant Association (ServSafe) — ServSafe Alcohol Online Exam Acceptance by State: <https://www.servsafe.com/ServSafe-Alcohol/ServSafe-Alcohol-Online-Acceptance>

Free practice questions for this exam: www.everyexamprep.com/exams/servsafe-alcohol/practice-test