CULINARY COMPASS MANAGEMENT, LLC (Sample)

Rapid Operational Assessment Report
Client: The Iron Fork Café — Bakersfield, CA
Date of Visit: October 5, 2025
Consultant: Bruce Tisler
Duration On-Site: 60 minutes

Executive Summary

This assessment provides a high-level snapshot of The Iron Fork Café's operational health. The focus was not exhaustive measurement, but pattern recognition identifying where time, product, and process fall out of sync.

Overall, the business demonstrates strong team morale and consistent guest volume, but several systems show signs of *reactive management*.
Most notably, **waste tracking**, **inventory discipline**, and **workflow alignment** need structural attention.
If addressed, these issues could improve net margin by an estimated 2–3% within one quarter.

1. Prime Cost Control (Labor + COGS)

Observation:
Manager estimated food cost at "around 35%" but had no current report on hand. Labor cost tracked verbally at "just under 30%." No recent reconciliation between sales and cost data.
Interpretation:
Reasonable awareness, but weak validation.
Status: ⚠️ *Needs Review*
Recommendation:
Implement a weekly prime cost roll-up from POS and invoices to ensure numbers reflect actual conditions.

2. Waste Tracking & Prevention

Observation:
Two bins observed containing significant prep waste: untrimmed vegetables and partial proteins. No written waste log.
Interpretation:
High visibility waste; staff unaware of cost implications.
Status: ❌ *At Risk*
Recommendation:

Introduce daily prep waste sheet and end-of-shift trash check. Use photos to train recognition of recoverable product.

3. Labor Scheduling & Efficiency

Observation:
Prep cook idle for long stretches during lunch rush while front line appeared short one expo. Staff mentioned “the schedule never changes.”
Interpretation:
Labor allocation not matching volume.
Status: ⚠️ *Needs Review*
Recommendation:
Run two-week analysis of hourly sales vs. labor to rebalance prep hours toward service peaks.

4. Inventory Accuracy & Purchasing

Observation:
Dry storage disorganized with duplicate SKUs and handwritten order notes. No visible par sheets. Manager orders “based on gut feel.”
Interpretation:
Lack of structured par control or verification.
Status: ❌ *At Risk*
Recommendation:
Create master inventory by category with unit standardization. Conduct weekly count using consistent person and method.

5. Food Safety & Compliance

Observation:
Cold line temperatures within range. Date labels consistent. One unlabeled prep container noted. Last health inspection posted (Aug 2024, 96%).
Interpretation:
Strong compliance culture with minor lapses.
Status: ✅ *Stable*
Recommendation:
Maintain current standard; implement random internal mini-audits twice monthly.

6. Training & Retention

Observation:
Four of six staff on duty have less than 90 days tenure. No structured onboarding process evident; training “done by whoever’s on.”
Interpretation:
Turnover manageable but knowledge retention fragile.

Status: ⚠️ *Needs Review*
Recommendation:
Create 7-day onboarding checklist and assign single trainer per department.

7. Service Quality & Guest Recovery

Observation:
Server handled late ticket politely but required manager approval for comp. Yelp reviews reflect "good food, inconsistent timing."
Interpretation:
Guest recovery dependent on manager presence; needs empowerment at floor level.
Status: ⚠️ *Needs Review*
Recommendation:
Define guest recovery policy with dollar limit of autonomy per employee.

8. Workflow & Line Efficiency

Observation:
Observed cross-traffic between grill and fry stations; prep items stored out of reach of cook line. Ticket times averaged 12 minutes for simple orders.
Interpretation:
Layout inefficiency causing cumulative time loss.
Status: ❌ *At Risk*
Recommendation:
Re-map line setup by frequency of use; run one pre-service mock to test new flow.

9. Communication & Culture

Observation:
Kitchen tone calm but occasionally clipped. Manager presence mostly office-bound. Front of house communicates by walk-ups, not headset or POS alerts.
Interpretation:
Functional culture with communication lag between FOH/BOH.
Status: ⚠️ *Needs Review*
Recommendation:
Implement simple order status board or verbal "call-and-confirm" system during peak.

10. Cash Handling & Loss Prevention

Observation:
Drawer count procedure verbally described, no dual verification. Comps/voids tracked in POS but not reviewed daily.
Interpretation:
Standard but vulnerable.

Status: ⚠️ *Needs Review*
Recommendation:
Adopt two-signature end-of-shift close and weekly comp/void audit.

Summary Table

Area	Status	Core Issue	Priority
Prime Cost Control	⚠️	No validated data	High
Waste Tracking	❌	No tracking system	Critical
Labor Scheduling	⚠️	Misaligned hours	Medium
Inventory	❌	No par levels	Critical
Food Safety	✅	Minor labeling lapse	Low
Training	⚠️	Unstructured onboarding	Medium
Service Recovery	⚠️	Manager-dependent	Medium
Workflow	❌	Inefficient layout	Critical
Communication	⚠️	FOH/BOH lag	Medium
Cash Handling	⚠️	Single verification	Medium

Overall Impression

The Iron Fork Café operates with strong intent and capable staff but lacks structural discipline in key control areas.
Waste and workflow issues appear intertwined — inefficiency on the line directly contributes to overproduction and mis-prep.
Leadership shows willingness to adapt once specific direction is provided.

Next Steps

1. **Comprehensive Waste & Workflow Audit** (2-day engagement)
2. **Prime Cost Validation** using real sales + purchasing data (remote follow-up)
3. **Layout and Process Redesign** workshop (on-site with kitchen team)

Estimated effort: 12–15 consulting hours.

Signature

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