

# HOW TO START A FOOD BUSINESS IN 2026

## 7-Part YouTube Series — Part 6

Channel: @Nasir-SimplifyYourBusiness


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# PART 6: MARKETING AND BRAND BUILDING

## VIDEO 6 OF 7

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## Part 6: Marketing & Brand Building in 2026

 Topic: Getting Customers Before, During & After Opening

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The food businesses that fail have one thing in common. It's not bad food. It's that nobody knew they existed. Marketing is not optional — it is oxygen. No marketing, no customers. No customers, no business. In this video I'm going to give you the exact marketing system to build buzz before you open, flood your opening week with customers, and keep them coming back month after month. And most of what I'm going to show you is completely free.

### SECTION 1: Build Before You Open — 6–8 Weeks Out

Here's the mistake I see every single food business make. They open the doors and THEN start marketing. That's backwards. You need to start marketing 6 to 8 weeks before you open. By the time you open, people should already be excited and waiting.

#### STEP 1: GOOGLE BUSINESS PROFILE — DO THIS TODAY

87% of people use Google to find local businesses. That means when someone searches 'pizza near me' or 'best takeaway in Crewe' — you need to show up. Google Business Profile is completely free. Set it up immediately. Add photos, your opening hours, your address, your phone number. Ask your first customers to leave a Google review. This is your number one free marketing tool.

#### STEP 2: SOCIAL MEDIA — START BEFORE YOU OPEN

- Create Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook pages as soon as you have a name
- Post behind-the-scenes content — the fit-out, the kitchen being set up, the menu being created
- People love to follow a story. 'We're opening in 6 weeks' builds anticipation
- Before you have food photos, share your team, your space, your inspiration

#### STEP 3: BUILD AN EMAIL LIST FROM DAY ONE

Set up a simple landing page — even just a link in bio — offering 10% off your first order in exchange for an email address. Every email address you collect is a customer you can reach directly, for free, forever. This is more valuable than any social media follower because you own the list.

## 🔗 SECTION 2: Your Grand Opening Strategy

Your opening week is your most important marketing moment. You need to get as many people through the door — or ordering — as possible. Because those first customers become your word-of-mouth army.

- Invite 5–10 local micro-influencers for a free tasting — people with 1,000 to 10,000 followers. Give them great food, great service, ask them to share. That's targeted, trusted marketing.
- Offer a launch discount — 20% off for the first week. Promote it everywhere.
- Contact local press — even a small local newspaper or community Facebook group
- Run a competition on Instagram — 'Win a free meal for two. Follow us and tag a friend.' Low cost, high reach.
- Put up signage on your unit 2 weeks before opening — 'Opening Soon' with your social media handles

**NASIR:** The goal of opening week is simple: get as many positive reviews as possible. On Google, on Just Eat, on Deliveroo. Actively ask every happy customer. Send a follow-up message. A business with 50 five-star reviews in week one is going to rank higher and convert more new customers than one with zero. Make getting reviews part of your process from day one.

## 🔗 SECTION 3: Ongoing Social Media Strategy

Once you're open, you need a consistent content calendar. You don't need to post 10 times a day — but you do need to be consistent. Here's what works in 2026.

### **INSTAGRAM — 4 to 6 posts per week:**

- Food photography — your hero dishes, plated beautifully
- Behind the scenes — kitchen prep, staff, delivery bags going out
- Customer testimonials — screenshot positive reviews and share them
- Promotions — weekly specials, combo deals, limited-time offers

### **TIKTOK / REELS — 2 to 3 short videos per week:**

- Cooking process videos — ASMR, time-lapse, satisfying food content
- 'A day in the life' of your kitchen
- Trending sounds with your food — stay current
- Authentic beats polished. A shaky phone video of a great dish beats a perfect ad.

And engage daily. Reply to every comment. Like local business posts. Follow local community accounts. Social media is social — you have to actually participate, not just broadcast.

## 🔗 SECTION 4: Email Marketing — Your Secret Weapon

While everyone's fighting over Instagram followers, smart food businesses are building email lists. Here's why: a social media post reaches maybe 5% of your followers organically. An email goes to 100% of your list.

- Send a weekly email newsletter — this week's specials, a story, a limited offer
- Send birthday emails — 'It's your birthday this month. Here's a free dessert.'
- Re-engagement emails — 'We haven't seen you in a while. Here's 15% off your next order.'

#### **FREE EMAIL TOOLS:**

- HubSpot — free for up to 2,000 contacts (you already use this — link it to your food business)
- Mailchimp — free tier, easy to use
- Beehiiv — great for newsletters, free to start

## **SECTION 5: Loyalty Programmes**

A loyal customer is worth 5 new customers. Because they keep coming back, they spend more each time, and they refer their friends for free. Build loyalty from day one.

- Punch card: 10 orders = 1 free appetiser or drink. Simple, physical, works brilliantly
- Birthday specials: Collect customer birthdays when they sign up to your email list. Send them something special. High conversion.
- Referral scheme: 'Refer a friend, both get £3 off.' Word of mouth with an incentive.

2026 marketing trends to keep in mind: short-form video is king, user-generated content — photos your customers post — is the highest-trust marketing available, and micro-influencers — those 1k to 10k follower accounts — give better ROI than paying a big celebrity. Use your POS data to personalise your marketing. If someone always orders vegan, send them your new vegan special. Data-driven, personalised marketing is the future.

## **Summary**

Marketing is the difference between a food business that survives and one that thrives. Build your presence before you open, go hard on your opening week, stay consistent on social media, and build your email list from day one. The businesses winning in 2026 are the ones that market like they mean it.

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