

The Ultimate Guide *to the* **Best Restaurant POS Systems**



The Ultimate Guide to the Best Restaurant POS Systems

If you're in the market for a new POS, you've probably discovered that finding reliable information on the best restaurant POS systems can be tricky.

Not only are there dozens of different providers to choose from, but each one has a unique set of features, tools, and services to offer – it's enough information to make anyone's head spin. And if you're a restaurateur, you don't have the time to scour through company websites and online reviews just to find the information you need.

To help you cut through the noise and make shopping for a new POS a little less painful, we've put together an ultimate guide to the best modern POS systems for restaurants. In this guide, we'll dive into in-depth reviews of all the top cloud POS providers (including our own). These comprehensive reviews will cover everything from pricing to payments, to help you narrow down the best restaurant POS for your specific business.

In each review, you'll find: A basic overview of each of the top modern POS systems for restaurants Each system's strengths and weaknesses Your payment processing options Software pricing and other fees The ideal restaurant for each POS system Key takeaways In addition to reviews of each provider. we've also included: A comparison chart featuring all the top modern **POS providers** A buyer's guide that highlights key considerations to take into account We know that no restaurant POS

system is a one-size-fits-all solution, and you need all the information you can get in order to make an informed decision. We hope that with this guide to the best restaurant POS systems, you'll find the answers to all your burning questions (and then some).





The Ultimate Guide to the Best Restaurant POS Systems

Table of Contents

- 6 TouchBistro
- **12** Toast
- **18** Square for Restaurants
- **24** Revel
- **30** Clover
- **36** Lightspeed
- 42 SpotOn
- **48** Lavu
- **54** Epos Now
- 62 Comparison Chart
- **66** Buyer's Guide

TouchBistro

Overview

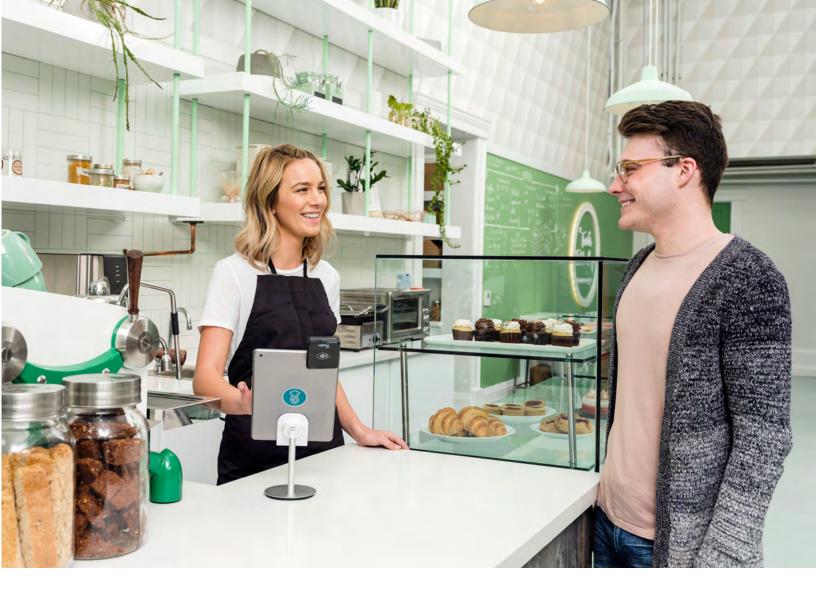
TouchBistro is an all-inone POS and restaurant management system that enables operators to delight their guests, maximize profitability, and grow their businesses. Designed exclusively with restaurants in mind. TouchBistro provides the most essential front of house, back of house, and guest engagement solutions on one easy-touse platform. It has even been featured as Gordon Ramsay's POS system of choice on the hit show Gordon Ramsay's 24 Hours to Hell and Back.

Strengths

One of TouchBistro's biggest strengths is its robust front of house, back of house. and guest engagement solutions, all of which can be accessed from one easyto-use cloud-based platform. Because TouchBistro was designed by restaurant industry veterans, its core features and add-on solutions have been specially crafted to meet the unique demands of running a restaurant. For instance, TouchBistro offers in-house solutions for inventory management, staff scheduling, and reservations, which are solutions that few other restaurant POS providers are able to offer without relying on third-party integration partners.

These kinds of carefully crafted, restaurant-specific features ultimately help distinguish TouchBistro from other POS systems on the market - many of which were primarily designed for retail businesses, not restaurants. And because all of these solutions are available on a single platform, operators enjoy a centralized, single source of truth for all operations, data, and reporting.

Beyond its robust product suite, it's also worth noting that TouchBistro is one of the most user-friendly POS systems on the market.



As mentioned, TouchBistro was built exclusively for restaurateurs by restaurant industry veterans. Consequently, the platform features a sleek, yet simple interface that is incredibly easy to learn, easy to train on, and easy to navigate on a day-to-day basis. Whether you run a small family restaurant or a multi-location chain with dozens of venues, a POS that is easy to use is essential because it speeds up the onboarding and training process for new staff, while also ensuring a smooth transition process for existing staff. One of TouchBistro's other, and arguably its most important, strengths is its unwavering commitment to fueling the success of restaurants and the entrepreneurs who run them. Unlike public POS companies such as Toast and Lightspeed, which make decisions in the interests of their shareholders, TouchBistro always puts people before profits. As a private POS company that is not owned by a payment processor, TouchBistro has been able to continue its mission of helping single and multi-unit venues thrive with innovative restaurant technology.

The Ultimate Guide to the Best Restaurant POS Systems

TouchBistro

Weaknesses

TouchBistro boasts an extensive list of POS features and add-on solutions that make it a great option for restaurants big and small. However, national or international chains may also find TouchBistro somewhat limiting due to its limited enterprise functionalities. While TouchBistro is well equipped for growing multi-location businesses, it does not offer the level of customization and flexibility that restaurants with hundreds of locations will require.

Because TouchBistro is largely designed for independent restaurants and not major chains, it does not have an overly extensive third-party partner network. Unlike some POS providers that offer integrations with dozens of different partners, TouchBistro supports integrations for a much more curated list of partners like 7shifts, Restaurant365, and Deliverect. While some restaurants may require more niche integrations, most restaurateurs will find that the integrations TouchBistro does offer more than covers their needs.





Payments

Like all the best restaurant POS systems, TouchBistro offers an in-house, fully integrated payment processing solution, TouchBistro Payments. The benefit of using an in-house payment processing solution is that the POS speaks directly to the payment terminals, allowing for a seamless flow of data and eliminating the need for manual entry. This direct integration reduces the risk of order errors (and subsequent chargebacks), while also ensuring a quick and easy payment process for customers.

TouchBistro's integrated payment processing solution is a particular standout because it's backed by a trusted financial institution. With TouchBistro Payments, you enjoy access to best-in-class payment processing technology, advanced security, and the support of dedicated payments experts. Not to mention, you also enjoy competitive rates with no hidden junk fees for you or your customers. **The Ultimate Guide** to the Best Restaurant POS Systems TouchBistro

Pricing

Not only are TouchBistro's payment processing fees competitive, but so are its monthly software fees. TouchBistro's software starts at \$69 per month for a single license, and its pricing is tiered so the cost decreases for each additional license you add. With each package, you get all of TouchBistro's core POS features, cloud-based reporting and analytics, 24/7/365 support, and unlimited users and logins for your staff and management.

Like other POS systems, you'll also have to factor in additional costs to use TouchBistro, such as installation, hardware, and payment processing fees (if you're using integrated payments). Because TouchBistro is an iPad-based POS system, you may be able to save on some hardware costs by reusing your current iPad tablets (as long as it's a compatible generation). TouchBistro also gives you the option to finance your hardware, which means your payments are split up over the course of your contract and you still own the hardware at the end.

The Best POS For: Single and Multi-Location Restaurants

With all the POS features you need to run a restaurant, TouchBistro is a great all-around solution for independent restaurants big and small – from single location operations to restaurant groups and regional chains. And with in-house technology like customer loyalty and integrated reservations, TouchBistro is one of the best restaurant POS systems for both QSRs and FSRs.

Though TouchBistro can easily support larger restaurants, it's not equipped with the kind of enterpriselevel capabilities required to support nation-wide, multi-unit chains. For restaurants with these kinds of complex needs, a more bespoke POS solution with extensive third-party integrations may be a better fit.

Ready to get started with TouchBistro?

Book a Demo



9

- An all-in-one POS and restaurant management system designed exclusively for restaurants
- A cloud-based system with a built-in offline mode
- Seamless integration between iOS software and Apple's iPad tablets
- Integrated payments with competitive pricing and the backing of a trusted financial institution
- Best for single and multilocation restaurants that are growing and scaling

Toast

Overview

Toast is another popular POS system for restaurants. Unlike many other providers, Toast's allin-one POS system is built on the Android operating system and requires the use of proprietary Android technology. Beyond its core POS system, Toast also offers an integrated payments solution, which has become a key area of focus since the company went public in September of 2021.

Strengths

Toast bills itself as an all-in-one system, which means the company offers a fairly robust product suite for restaurants. Toast also provides some unique POS features for niche restaurant concepts, such as pizzerias and hotel restaurants.

As extensive as Toast's features are, it's worth noting that the majority of these products are only available in the U.S., which means restaurants in Canada and other countries will not have access to certain add-on solutions like online ordering, or the brand's multi-location management features – something to take note of if you're not based in the U.S. or plan to expand outside of the U.S.

Toast also shines when it comes to thirdparty integrations. Toast works with dozens of best-in-class partners to deliver specialized solutions for restaurants, and even allows operators to build and customize their integrations using Toast APIs. For those who operate more niche restaurant concepts, access to such a wide range of integrations is a big plus, as it allows for a more bespoke POS setup.



The Ultimate Guide to the Best Restaurant POS Systems

Weaknesses

According to the <u>State of Restaurants</u>

Reports, operators cited a lack of transparency as one of their biggest frustrations with payment processors. And on this front, Toast is a major offender. In June of 2023, Toast announced it would be introducing a 99-cent fee paid by quests on orders of \$10 or higher placed through Toast's online ordering channels. This charge was implemented as a hidden "junk" fee on consumers' bills, which many operators viewed as sneaky and underhanded. And while Toast later reversed course on its decision, it's clear that the company has no qualms about adjusting its payment processing terms on a dime, simply to squeeze a little more out of restaurants and their customers. For multi-location operators, this is an important consideration, as these kinds of changes can have a massive impact.

Another major drawback to Toast is that the system runs on an Android operating system. Though Android offers the benefits of flexibility and customization, Android POS systems are less common in the restaurant industry because the operating system comes with a steep learning curve and updates are often fragmented due to the variances in available hardware. Additionally, Android systems are the primary target of malware, meaning they are at a higher risk of security breaches. Not to mention, Toast's system uses proprietary Android hardware, which will not work with other POS systems if you choose to make a switch down the line.

Though it may not be a deal-breaker for every restaurant, Toast's limited reservations system may be a major drawback. While Toast recently introduced its own reservations management solution called Toast Tables, this software is still very much in its infancy. Perhaps the biggest drawback is that ToastTables lacks an online discovery platform for diners to find new restaurants and book a table. This limited reach means that the solution is only useful to restaurants that already have a strong website presence and can expect diners to specifically come to their website to make a booking. is only useful to restaurants that already have a strong website presence and can expect diners to specifically come to their website to make a booking.



Payments

Toast offers integrated payments with all of its POS packages, which means you enjoy a direct integration between your POS and payment processor. However, Toast is not compatible with any other payment processors, so you are essentially required to Toast Payments if you want to use the Toast POS. Though this may not be an issue for most operators, it's worth taking into consideration when evaluating Toast as a potential POS and payments partner.

As mentioned, it's also worth considering that Toast has a reputation for making major changes to its payments pricing structure, with little regard for the impact on operators. In addition to the 99-cent fee incident, Toast also <u>quietly raised its</u> <u>processing fees</u> for its small and midsized restaurants in September of 2024.

Pricing

When compared to other cloudbased restaurant POS systems, Toast's monthly software fees are in line with most other providers. Though Toast does have a basic subscription that starts at \$0 per month, this package is primarily designed for smaller venues like cafes and coffee shops because it includes more limited features. Toast's more complete offering is its Point of Sale package, which is better suited to restaurants and starts at \$69 per month.

While Toast's monthly software fees are reasonable, they aren't the only costs to take into account. Remember that you're also obligated to use Toast as your payment processor, which comes with its own set of fees. Additionally, you also need to purchase Toast's proprietary hardware in order to use the POS – something that you might not need to do if you switch from one iPad-based POS system to another.

The Best POS For: Niche Restaurant Concepts

With its Android technology, extensive third-party partnerships, and open API, the Toast POS is particularly well suited to niche restaurant concepts in need of a more bespoke and flexible solution. For instance, operators of pizzerias, ice cream shops, and even hotel restaurants will all benefit from the option to customize their POS and add the exact integrations needed for their specific restaurant concept.

But while Toast offers some big benefits for niche concepts, there are a few drawbacks for the average restaurant. With its proprietary hardware requirements, Android operating system, and inflexible payment processing requirements, the average restaurateur may prefer a solution that allows them to get up and running more quickly and change with them as they grow.

Key Takeaways **Toast**

9

- A restaurant-specific POS system
- Limited product availability in some regions
- Runs on an Android operating system and Toast's proprietary Android hardware
- Opaque payment processing terms
- Best for niche multilocation restaurant concepts in need of a more customized solution

Square for Restaurants

Overview

Square for Restaurants

is restaurant-specific software from the popular mobile payment company Square. Like the company's other products, Square for Restaurants is designed for simplicity, combining an iOS-based POS system with Square's signature payment processing services. Though Square itself is available in many countries, Square for Restaurants is only available in the U.S., Canada, Ireland, and Spain.

Strengths

Square's biggest strength has always been that its products are easy to use and quick to learn. Square's POS setup consists of Apple iPads and proprietary hardware like the Square Terminal. This hardware not only makes for a quick setup process, but the devices are intuitive enough for virtually any staff member to pick up and learn.

As most restaurateurs would probably agree, Square's other major draw is its price. Square for Restaurants is one of the more affordable restaurant POS systems on the market, starting at just \$60 per month for one device, and another \$40 per month for each additional device. The company even boasts a free version of its software, though the features are extremely limited, and you still need to pay for Square's hardware and payment processing fees in order to use it.



Square for Restaurants

Weaknesses

While Square's simplicity and affordability are part of the reason why it's one of the top restaurant POS systems, all this comes at a cost. Square for Restaurants is a much more basic POS system than many of its competitors. This means that many of Square POS features are less robust and lack some of the unique functions available with other systems.

For instance, Square's inventory feature has limited capabilities and lacks complex functions like tracking food and ingredient costs. Square also lacks an in-house reservations management feature, which is a product that a growing number of FSRs rely on. All this means that restaurants that need more built-out features are forced to rely on Square's third-party integration partners, instead of in-house solutions.

Part of the reason for Square's limited feature set is because the company caters to a wide range of industries. Retail actually makes up a significant portion of Square's customer base, alongside professional services like beauty salons, barbershops, and fitness studios. As a result, Square's resources are spread extremely thin across the organization and ongoing product development for restaurants is less extensive than you can expect from a restaurant-specific POS provider.

One final drawback of using Square for Restaurants is the limited growth potential of the system. Square's bread and butter has always been, and continues to be, small, solo operations. While the POS is great for new entrepreneurs who need to get up and running quickly, Square's platform offers limited opportunities for growth. Not only are Square's core POS features more basic than other POS systems on the market, but its multi-location management tools are also incredibly new and have not yet benefited from lengthy customer use and feedback. And with Square's primary focus on generating payments revenue, ongoing developments may not be as swift as many operators would like.



Payments

When you sign up for Square for Restaurants, you also need to sign up with Square as your payment processor. Not only does this prevent you from using your preferred payment processor, but it also means you will end up locked in with relatively high payment processing rates. So while Square's subscription fees may be low, keep in mind that you could still end up with a hefty monthly bill just from all those credit card processing fees. Square for Restaurants

Pricing

Pricing is one reason why Square for Restaurant may initially be an appealing choice to operators. Unlike most of the top restaurant POS systems, Square does offer a free version of its software with no monthly charges. However, the free version of Square for Restaurants has very limited capabilities and you still need to pay for the necessary hardware and Square's payment processing services in order to use the system, which means it will end up costing you a whole lot more than \$0 per month

A more comparable offering is Square's Plus package, which costs \$60 per month per location, and \$40 per month per added device. This package comes with all of Square's core POS features, full reporting, and 24/7 support. Though you still need to account for the cost of hardware and Square's payment processing fees as well.

The Best POS For: Food Trucks and Cafes

With its affordable monthly software fees and easy iPad setup, Square for Restaurants is one of the best restaurant POS systems for new food service venues that are looking to get up and running very quickly. Square's simple and streamlined design also makes it a great option for restaurants that process lower ticket items or process a lower volume, such as cafes and food trucks.

However, Square for Restaurants has more limited capabilities than other restaurant POS systems and offers little room for growth. For many FSRs and QSRs – especially those that plan to scale – this means that Square for Restaurants' POS and reporting features may not be robust enough to support their busy operations.

Key Takeaways **Square for Restaurants**

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- Not a restaurant-specific solution
- Payments-focused business model designed to maximize the company's payment processing revenue
- Seamless integrations between iOS software and Apple iPad tablets
- More basic POS features and add-on solutions
- Best for small, singlelocation venues, such as food trucks and cafes

Revel

Overview

Revel is an iPad-based POS system that's used across North America, and in a number of countries in Europe and Asia. Revel is best known for its robust POS features and its enterprise-level capabilities. The POS system is particularly popular among major fast food and fast casual chains in the U.S., including The Halal Guys and Fat Brands (the entity behind franchises like Fatburger and Round Table Pizza).

Strengths

There's no question that Revel's robust list of enterprise-level features is a major plus for many restaurants. Revel is used by some major fast food and fast casual brands, and that's largely because Revel offers an impressive range of QSR-friendly solutions. For instance, Revel offers a dedicated drivethru solution, a self-service kiosk, and a customer-facing display – all of which are integrated directly with the POS. All of these in-house add-on solutions make it easier to manage multi-location QSR brands from one platform, which is a major plus for any operator.

Another major advantage that Revel has over some restaurant POS systems is that it runs on Apple's iOS operating system and uses iPads as its POS terminals. Unlike Android systems, iOS apps and iPads boast a seamless integration, and updates are rolled out automatically across devices so you never have to worry about your software being out of date. Not to mention, iPads are extremely user-friendly, which can speed up the training process.



Weaknesses

While Revel's powerful POS features are a plus for some restaurants, more isn't always better. For single and multilocation restaurants with less than 20 locations, Revel's extensive and complex features can make navigating the software overwhelming and tough for new staff to learn. In many cases, most independent restaurants will not need all the bells and whistles that come with Revel's software.

And for non-chain restaurants, paying for features you won't use comes at cost. Of all the cloud-based restaurant POS systems on the market, Revel's monthly software fees are on the higher end. Revel's monthly software fees start at \$99 per month for just one terminal and installation costs start at \$649. For smaller restaurants with thin profit margins, these high fees can significantly eat into monthly profits. Lastly, it's worth noting that Revel is not a restaurant-specific solution. Revel sells POS systems to both restaurants and retail businesses, and the retail side of the company has become an increasing priority over the years. For instance, Revel recently signed a major retail chain, Buff City Soaps, and then followed that with the release of Revel Guard XT, which is an enterprise solution that allows for the close monitoring of all devices in a store or chain of stores. Both of these developments signal the company's increasing focus on the retail sector, which likely means less time and resources will be dedicated to restaurants as the company seeks to satisfy both sectors - something that's worth taking into consideration if you plan to stick with Revel for the long haul.



Payments

If you want to use the Revel POS system, you also need to use the company's integrated payment processing solution, Revel Advantage. While this may not be a problem for most operators, the tricky part is that Revel also requires a three-year-long commitment to using Revel Advantage.

Three years is a long time in the restaurant industry, especially if you plan to grow and expand your business. This major upfront commitment can create a somewhat very restrictive situation for operators, because you could end up stuck with a payment processor that doesn't meet your changing needs.

Pricing

At \$99 per month for one terminal, Revel's monthly software fees are higher than many other POS programs for restaurants. However, this higher cost does mean you get a bit more bang for your buck as all of Revel's plans come with a robust suite of POS features, reporting and analytics, 24/7 support, and personalized onboarding.

Beyond its monthly software fees, it's also important to account for the other costs of using Revel's POS system, including installation fees, hardware, and the payment processing fees for Revel Advantage. While you may be able to offset some hardware fees if you're switching from another iPad-based POS system, Revel is still one of the priciest restaurant POS systems out there.

The Best POS For: Multi-Unit QSR Chains

With some of the most robust and customizable POS features out there, Revel is an excellent option for multi-unit establishments. Revel is a particularly great choice for big-name QSR businesses with locations that span the country. QSR brands of this size are sure to benefit from Revel's robust QSR solutions, including drivethru technology and a dedicated self-service kiosk solution.

Of course, not every restaurant needs the kind of bespoke POS system that Revel provides. For independent restaurants with one or even a dozen locations, the price of Revel's POS system may be too steep for features that can't or won't be used. Not to mention, Revel's expensive software, restrictive contracts, and expensive payment processing fees also make the solution a poor fit for growing businesses that need the free cash flow and flexibility to scale quickly.





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- A cloud-based solution with a built-in offline mode
- Runs on an iOS operating system and Apple hardware
- Extensive in-house solutions for QSRs, including a drive-thru system
- High fees for integrated payment processing and inflexible, long-term contracts
- Best for major QSR chains

Clover

Overview

Clover POS is a cloudbased POS system that runs on an Android operating system and proprietary hardware. Unlike other restaurant POS systems, the Clover system is made up of a series of apps that can be downloaded to meet the needs of restaurants, retailers, and other small businesses.

Strengths

Clover's most unique feature, and perhaps its biggest strength, is its app marketplace. Clover's App Marketplace is stocked with a wide variety of in-house, restaurant-specific apps, which you can download to customize your system. As a result, you can build a bespoke POS solution made up of only the features you need to run your specific restaurant. The Clover API is even available to developers if you want to build a custom feature.

Because Clover is essentially run on apps, it comes as no surprise that the company supports a lengthy list of thirdparty partners. This means that even if Clover doesn't offer an in-house solution for a specific feature, there are plenty of third-party providers you can use.



The Ultimate Guide to the Best Restaurant POS Systems

Clover

Weaknesses

While Clover's unique app-based system is a plus for many restaurants, it can also be a drawback. In many cases, the free versions of the Clover apps have very limited capabilities, meaning you need to pay to access more robust POS features – features that generally come standard on other POS systems. For restaurants that need many different features to run their business, the cost of all these apps can quickly add up.



Cost is also an issue when it comes to Clover's proprietary hardware setup. Clover runs on its own proprietary Android hardware, which means you have to make a big upfront investment in POS hardware – hardware that you won't be able to use with another system if you decide to switch providers in the future. Not to mention, proprietary hardware is much harder to source and repair, so you could be looking at long wait times if you're ever in need of hardware maintenance.

Finally, there's the issue of the POS system itself. Unlike many other restaurant POS systems, Clover was not specifically designed for the needs of restaurants. Clover serves a wide variety of industries and places a heavy emphasis on its retail solutions. As a result, Clover does not always have the advanced features or capabilities to support growing restaurants.



Payments

Early on, Clover was acquired by the payment processing company Fiserv (First Data). As a result, Fiserv is the only integrated payments solution that Clover supports. While this means you have a little less flexibility, you also benefit from having a fully integrated payments solution. With Fiserv, you can process payments in-venue, at the table, online, or even over the phone.

Pricing

Depending on the type of restaurant you operate, Clover can be a highly affordable POS solution. The company's Counter-Service Restaurants package starts at just \$54.95 per month for two systems, while its Table-Service Restaurant package starts at \$84.95 per month.

In addition to Clover's monthly software fees, it's also important to factor in the cost of hardware. As noted, Clover uses proprietary Android hardware, which means that you need to invest in Clover's hardware upfront in order to use the system. For restaurants that are currently using Apple hardware, this is a major consideration.

The Best POS For: Retail-Focused Restaurant Concepts

With its unique app ecosystem, Clover is one of the most flexible and versatile restaurant POS systems. The unique set up allows restaurants to pick and choose from a wide variety of apps, including extensive retail and ecommerce functions. As a result, Clover is well suited to restaurants that focus more on retail sales, and less on dine-in service.

While Clover's app-based system is perfect for unique restaurant concepts looking for a bespoke POS solution, it's less useful for more traditional restaurants. QSRs and FSRs may find that many of Clover's apps lack the robust capabilities of the core features found on other restaurant POS systems. As a result, these kinds of venues may quickly outgrow their Clover POS.

9

Key Takeaways **Clover**

- Not a restaurant-specific solution
- Runs on an Android operating system and proprietary hardware
- Unique app ecosystem that allows restaurateurs to customize their POS system
- In-house POS features have limited capabilities
- Best for retail-focused restaurants concepts with less of an emphasis on dine-in service

Lightspeed

Overview

Lightspeed is a popular all-in-one POS system that's used across Canada, the U.S., Mexico, and Europe. Unlike some other POS systems on the market, Lightspeed sells POS systems for retail and golf courses, in addition to restaurants.

Strengths

One of Lightspeed's biggest strengths is that the system primarily runs on an iOS operating system and uses Apple hardware (though a series of recent acquisitions means that the company now offers an Android option as well). For the most part, iOS is generally considered a more reliable and user-friendly operating system because Apple owns both the hardware (the iPad) and the software (iOS). This not only makes for a seamless integration between the POS software and tablets, but also an intuitive user experience. Not to mention, many of the other top POS providers on the market use Apple hardware, which means you may be able to reuse your tablets if you switch to another iPad-based POS system down the line.

Lightspeed also shines when it comes to third-party integrations. Lightspeed boasts a fairly extensive list of integration partners for services such as payroll, accounting, staff management, marketing, and more. Beyond restaurant-specific integrations, Lightspeed also works with best-in-class partners to offer property management system software for hotels, membership management software for golf courses, and ecommerce solutions for retailers. All in all, these integrations help operators to greatly extend the capabilities of their POS system.



The Ultimate Guide to the Best Restaurant POS Systems

Lightspeed

Weaknesses

While Lightspeed is used in many restaurants, it's important to note that Lightspeed is not a restaurant-specific POS solution. Lightspeed was originally founded as a POS and ecommerce software provider for retail businesses. It was not until nine years into business that Lightspeed expanded its offerings to include POS software for restaurants. And while Lightspeed now serves a number of restaurants, its primary focus remains retail and ecommerce. In fact, Lightspeed officially changed its name to Lightspeed Commerce Inc. in 2021 to reflect its laser-focus on retail, eCommerce, and driving payments revenue.

Lightspeed's overwhelming emphasis on the retail sector (as well as the golf course sector) means that, unlike some of the other POS providers on the market, Lightspeed's research and development efforts are split between different areas of focus. As a result, some of Lightspeed's core restaurant POS features are not quite as robust as other solutions on the market and there is less investment in building new solutions for restaurant businesses. Another weakness of Lightspeed is its lack of an in-house reservation system - a major consideration for just about any FSR. Though Lightspeed does offer integrations with thirdparty reservation apps like SevenRooms, Lightspeed does not have an in-house reservations management solution. While using a third-party app may not be an issue for every restaurant, it's important to keep in mind that some third-party solutions charge a fee per cover, which can be an added cost each month. Additionally, some apps also own the restaurant's guest booking data, which means that you won't be able to use your reservations data to drive engagement for your own business.



In the U.S. and Canada, Lightspeed customers can use Lightspeed Payments, which is an integrated payment processing solution powered by the global payments platform Stripe. This integrated solution allows you to accept payment in-venue, tableside, or online, for a quick and seamless solution.

Operators do have the option to use a third-party processor instead of Lightspeed Payments, but this results in higher monthly software fees. There are also the added headaches of an unintegrated payment solution to consider, such as a less seamless transfer of data and disjointed support.

Pricing

Lightspeed bundles its offerings so you either pay \$189 USD for the Essential package, or \$399 for the Premium package. The Essential package comes with all the core POS features a single venue restaurant needs, as well as personalized onboarding, basic reporting, free updates, and 24/7 support. On the other hand, the Premium package includes the same basic POS features, as well as multilocation management features.

Keep in mind that while these bundles include all the basic POS features, they don't include add-on solutions like KDS, accounting, or gift cards. Each of these add-ons will cost you extra (the KDS alone is priced at \$40 per month, per screen), so keep this in mind when budgeting how much Lightspeed will set you back each month.

The Best POS For: Restaurants with a Retail Component

With expertise in POS solutions for retail businesses and ecommerce, Lightspeed is an excellent solution for restaurants that also include a retail component, such as breweries with bottle shops, or cafes that also sell groceries. Lightspeed not only offers in-house solutions for these unique restaurant concepts, but it also offers dozens of third-party integrations that allow you to create a bespoke POS solution for your business.

However, for more traditional FSRs and QSRs, Lightspeed may not be the ideal solution. Lightspeed lacks some crucial in-house solutions that many restaurants rely on for day-to-day operations, such as robust inventory management features. Additionally, Lightspeed lacks some valuable add-on features, such as inhouse reservations, which are important to today's independent restaurants.

Key Takeaways **Lightspeed**

- Not a restaurant-specific POS solution (originally built for retail)
- Public company invested in increasing shareholder value rather than R&D
- Primarily runs on an iOS operating system and Apple hardware
- Large selection of third-party integration partners to choose from
- Best for restaurants with an integrated retail concept

SpotOn

Overview

SpotOn originally began as a marketing and loyalty platform called SpotOn Transact, and has since transformed into a payment processing and POS software. As a result, SpotOn offers a large suite of in-house, value added services for restaurants, including marketing, loyalty, and review management. However, the company also creates products for a wide range of other businesses, including clothing retailers, auto repair shops, nail salons, plumbers, accountants, and more.

Strengths

As mentioned, SpotOn offers an extensive suite of in-house, value added services for restaurants and other businesses. This includes standard add-on products such as loyalty and online ordering, but also more niche solutions such as a website builder, ecommerce solutions, appointment scheduling, review management software, and more. However, it's worth noting that not all of these products were specifically designed with restaurants in mind. For instance, SpotOn also markets the same website builder and ecommerce solution to retail businesses like nail salons and barbershops – businesses that have very different website needs than restaurants.

SpotOn's other major strength is its customer support. SpotOn prides itself on offering 24/7 U.S.-based support via phone or email. SpotOn also offers inperson hardware installation, face-toface staff training, and ongoing virtual training for both staff and management. And, for the most part, the SpotOn POS reviews about the company's customer support are quite positive.



Weaknesses

As mentioned, SpotOn offers a pretty extensive list of products and features, and that's because it serves so many industries. Beyond restaurants, SpotOn also offers POS software and payment processing solutions for retail, auto repair shops, beauty salons, campuses, sports stadiums, and more. In fact, 60% of SpotOn's customers are actually in the retail space. This means the company's time and resources are spread thin across a wide variety of customers with wildly different needs, all of which results in less time spent developing and refining the company's restaurant-specific solutions.



Another reason SpotOn may not be the most restaurant-friendly solution is that the POS runs on a Windows operating system and requires the use of its own proprietary Windows devices. As a result, you'll need to invest in a lot of proprietary hardware just to get up and running with SpotOn. And once you do, be prepared to commit for the long haul. Most of the top restaurant POS systems rely on Apple iPads and iOS software, so if you invest in SpotOn's proprietary Windows devices, you won't be able to use the devices with another system if you switch POS providers down the line.

Lastly, it's important to note the long-term limitations of SpotOn's solution, particularly for multi-location restaurants. While SpotOn is also equipped with some multi-location management features, these features are more limited because the company's restaurant-specific solution is primarily designed for single location restaurants. In fact, the majority of the enterprise clients that SpotOn supports are actually stadiums and sports venues, not restaurants. While this may not be an issue for very small, solo operations, it's worth taking into consideration if you have any plans to grow or expand your restaurant down the line.



SpotOn offers POS-integrated payments through a plan called SpotOn with Payments. Though SpotOn claims that its integrated payment processing solution comes with competitive payment processing rates, some reviews note that the terms of these contracts are somewhat fuzzy, with SpotOn being granted an abnormally high level of access to merchant accounts.

Pricing

SpotOn bundles its software, so you can choose the solution that best fits your restaurant concept. The Counter Service bundle costs \$99 per month, plus \$3 per employee, per month, and includes basic POS features such as menu management, reporting, and staff management. There is also a Full Service bundle that costs \$135 per month, plus \$3 per employee, per month, and includes everything in the Counter Service bundle, as well as digital and tableside ordering features. You also have the option to customize your solution for a custom price.

It's also worth noting that your monthly software fees are not the only costs to consider. With SpotOn, you also need to factor in the cost of the company's proprietary Window's hardware, which is a major expense that you'll need to make up front, and ongoing integrated payment processing fees.

The Best POS For: Restaurants with a Retail Component

With a wide variety of in-house, valueadded services, SpotOn offers a robust and capable POS system. However, many of these add-ons, such as its ecommerce solution, appointment scheduler, and website builder, are more valuable to retailers and other small businesses than restaurants.

As a result, SpotOn is best suited to niche restaurant concepts with an added retail element, such as breweries with an on-site bottle shop or QSRs that also sell some grocery items. These types of restaurants are most likely to get the full benefit of SpotOn's many integrated tools, while more traditional FSRs and QSRs may benefit from a more dedicated restaurant POS.



Key Takeaways **SpotOn**

- Not a restaurant-specific POS solution
- Runs on a Windows operating system and proprietary Windows hardware
- Extensive suite of in-house, value added solutions such as ecommerce and a website builder
- Limited multi-location management features for restaurants
- Best for restaurants with an integrated retail concept

Lavu

Overview

Lavu is an iPad-based POS and payment processing system used by restaurants in more than 90 different countries worldwide. Founded in 2010, Lavu has more than a decade of experience providing restaurant management solutions and boasts more than 300 features and add-on solutions.

Strengths

Like many of the best restaurant POS systems, Lavu offers a wide range of features, add-ons, and third-party integrations. However, Lavu has gone the extra mile to develop dedicated POS solutions for several niche restaurant concepts. For instance, Lavu offers a Pizza POS equipped with tools like the Pizza Creator, which allows you to build and customize virtual pizzas on your device for easy preparation, pricing, and delivery. Lavu also offers similar POS solutions for other niche restaurant concepts such as ice cream shops, wineries, breweries, and more.

One of Lavu's other major selling features is that users can choose a hybrid setup if they prefer the reliability of a hardwired connection, but want to enjoy the remote capabilities of a cloud solution. With Lavu's Local Server option, the iPad POS terminals only need to connect with the Mac Mini to run, which adds a layer of protection against an internet outage. However, it's worth noting that the Lavu Local Server does cost extra.



The Ultimate Guide Ito the Best Restaurant POS Systems

Lavu

Weaknesses

When it comes to POS features, Lavu offers restaurant-specific tools for just about any scenario you could think of. However, Lavu's "do it all" approach sometimes means that the quality of its features is not consistent across the board. For instance, Lavu's inventory management feature is very robust and can support restaurants of nearly any size. On the other hand, many of Lavu's other features – specifically its staff management and floor plan management features – fall short.



Lavu is also lacking when it comes to its selection of in-house add-on solutions. For instance, Lavu only offers very basic inventory management features, so you can do little beyond keeping track of basic stock. Lavu also lacks any in-house solutions for labor management or reservations, which means you'll need to find thirdparty solutions for those functions.

Finally, Lavu struggles when it comes to providing consistent customer service and technical support. While the company boasts 24/7 support, user reviews note that the support they receive is not always helpful. While every software certainly has its share of negative online reviews, the complaints about Lavu's customer support show some concerning trends that are worth noting.



Lavu offers both an in-house payment processing solution, LavuPay, or the option to use a third-party payment processor. While some restaurants may want the flexibility of choosing their preferred payment processor, LavuPay was designed specifically for restaurants to create an all-in-one solution where everything you need falls under the same umbrella. Lavu also promises top-notch security and 24/7 support for its integrated payment processing solution, which are huge benefits for today's restaurateurs.

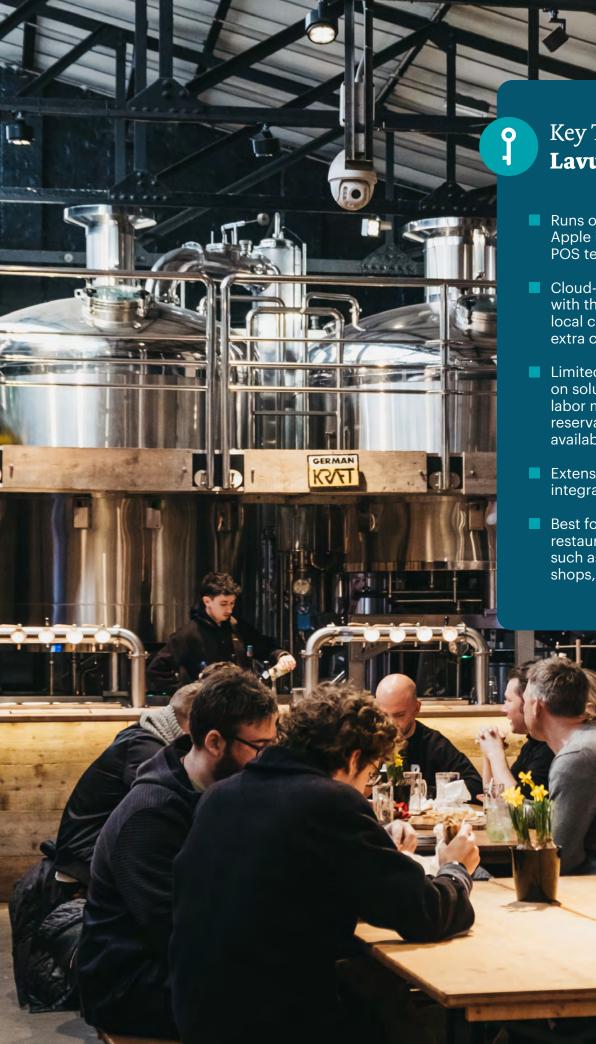
Pricing

When it comes to pricing, Lavu's software starts at \$59 USD per month for a single POS terminal. For this price, you get most of Lavu's core POS features, including 24/7 support, and real-time sales and labor reporting. Lavu also offers a \$129 per month package that includes add-ons like loyalty and online ordering, and a \$279 per month package that includes all add-ons and certain integrations like QuickBooks/Xero.

The Best POS For: Highly Specific Restaurant Concepts

With an extensive list of features, numerous third-party integration partners, and optional hybrid setup, Lavu is a good option for some restaurants. Lavu is particularly well suited to venues such as pizzerias, ice cream shops, breweries, and wineries because of its highly specialized solutions for niche restaurant concepts.

While Lavu excels when it comes to creating features for very specific restaurant concepts like pizzerias, this "do it all" approach means that some of Lavu's core POS features are lacking. Instead of focusing on the quality of its core POS features, Lavu seems to prioritize quantity. For many busy QSRs and FSRs, this means that Lavu's core POS features may not be robust enough to keep up with the demands of day-to-day operations.



Key Takeaways **Lavu**

- Runs on iOS and uses Apple iPad tablets as the POS terminals
- Cloud-based POS system with the option to add a local connection for an extra charge
- Limited in-house addon solutions, with no labor management or reservations software available
- Extensive list of third-party integration partners
- Best for highly specific restaurant concepts such as pizzerias, ice cream shops, wineries, etc.

Epos Now

Overview

Epos Now is a cloudbased software provider that specializes in POS systems for retail and hospitality businesses. The company is based in the U.K., however, it has since expanded its availability to North America, Australia, and New Zealand.

Strengths

Unlike nearly every other restaurant POS system on the market, Epos Now can be run on iOS, Android, or Windows. The POS is compatible with Google Chrome and Safari web browsers, which means that you can run the system on any device that supports those browsers. There is also an iPad app available, so you can use an iPad as a POS terminal and for certain back office functions. This kind of flexibility is extremely beneficial for restaurateurs because it means you can choose the operating system and hardware that works best for your particular restaurant and budget.

Epos Now also bills itself as a budgetfriendly solution overall. Epos Now's software starts at just \$39 per month, and varies based on the number of locations you have and the number of POS terminals you need. Though Epos Now's basic software package doesn't include technical support, it's still an affordable option for restaurants that need a very basic restaurant POS system.



Epos Now

Weaknesses

While Epos Now may be relatively affordable, the trade-off of a lower price tag is that you get a whole lot less. Epos Now was originally designed for retail, so its restaurant-specific features are still fairly basic. While you will be able to carry out everyday tasks such as taking orders and splitting checks, you won't be able to carry out more complex tasks or create custom reports. These feature limitations can not only impact day-to-day operations, but they can also prevent your restaurants from growing and improving profitability over time.

Beyond missing features, Epos Now is also lacking when it comes to technical support. That's because support is not actually included with any of Epos Now's software packages. This means that if you want to ensure you can actually reach someone when problems arise, you will need to purchase a separate technical support package for a minimum of 12-months – a cost that can quickly add up. While pricey, purchasing this additional support package is something to strongly consider because Epos Now has no community page where users can come together to troubleshoot issues, and the brand's online selfhelp guides are fairly limited.

Finally, there is the lack of in-house addon solutions to consider. Epos Now offers virtually no in-house add-ons, meaning restaurateurs are forced to rely on thirdparty partners for everything from staff management to reservations. While some integrations work better than others, these apps rarely sync perfectly with your POS because they are developed by third-parties. As a result, there's a higher risk of losing your precious business data to errors and bugs.



Unlike some of the major POS providers on the market, Epos Now gives customers some flexibility to use a third-party payment processor or build a custom payments integration using the company's API. However, it's important to note that you will need to pay a higher monthly software fee if you don't use Epos Now's integrated payment processing solution.

It's also important to note that if you choose to use a payment processor that's not integrated with Epos Now, you'll have to carry out all credit card transactions separately and enter the amounts from each transaction manually into the POS system. For any restaurant that processes a high volume of transactions, this is a major consideration because manually entering each transaction is not only time consuming, but also carries the risk of costly data entry errors.

Pricing

As mentioned already,

Epos Now bills itself as one of the most affordable POS systems out there. And if you need a bare-bones POS solution and basic hardware, Epos Now is indeed a budget-friendly option.

But while Epos Now's monthly software fees may be on the low end, there are other fees to account for. For instance, Epos Now's software subscriptions do not include technical support, so you have to factor in the added cost of an annual support package. There are also other hidden fees to consider with Epos Now, such as the cost to upload a spreadsheet to the system, and extra fees if you don't integrate your POS with Epos Now's own payment processing solution all of which can add up to make Epos Now a much more expensive option than it initially seems.

The Best POS For: Small-Scale Foodservice Businesses

Based on its affordable pricing, flexible hardware options, and uncomplicated POS features, it's clear that Epos Now is a good option for small-scale foodservice businesses with relatively straightforward needs. For instance, businesses such as ice cream shops, juice bars, and coffee carts would benefit from a system like Epos Now because it covers all the basics, and won't weigh you down with advanced features that you may not end up using.

However, if you need to carry out anything more than basic POS functions, you'll likely find Epos Now inadequate. Epos Now was not originally created for hospitality businesses and many of its restaurant POS features are still limited. Not to mention, Epos Now also doesn't offer any in-house solutions for add-ons like loyalty or reservations that can help your restaurant scale. For many QSRs and FSRs, a system like Epos Now is likely not robust enough to support a growing restaurant business.

Key Takeaways **Epos Now**

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- Not a restaurant-specific solution (also built for retail, hotels, spas, and more)
- Runs on iOS, Android, or Windows operating systems and is compatible with a wide range of hardware
- Basic core POS features and limited in-house add-ons available
- Added cost for technical support package
- Best for basic foodservice businesses with very straightforward needs

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The Ultimate Guide to the Best Restaurant POS System

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When it comes to choosing a POS system, ease of use, affordability, and reliability are the top 3 considerations for today's restaurateurs.

The Ultimate Guide	TouchBistro	Toast	Square for Restaurants	Revel	Clover
to the Best Restaurant POS Systems	POS System: Cloud-based	POS System: Cloud-based	POS System: Cloud-based	POS System: Cloud-based	POS System: Cloud-based
Compare	Operating System: iOS	Operating System: Android	Operating System: iOS	Operating System: iOS	Operating System: Android
Your	Available in: CAD, U.S., and more	Available in: U.S., CAD, U.K., Ireland	Available in: CAD, U.S., Ireland and Spain	Available in: U.S., CAD, U.K., AU, SG, HK, SA, KW, U.A.E., and more	Available in: CAD, U.S., U.K.
Options	Hardware: iPads	Hardware: Android tablets	Hardware: iPads	Hardware: iPads	Hardware: Android tablets
Core POS Features					
Menu Management					

Menu Management	\checkmark	\checkmark	\bigcirc	\checkmark	
Staff Management	O	O	O	O	
Floor Plan Management	\bigcirc	\bigcirc	\bigcirc	\bigcirc	
Tableside Ordering	O	O	O	O	
Reporting	\bigcirc	Ø	I	Ø	
1:1 Onboarding	O	Ø	O	O	\bigotimes
Customer Support	24/7/365	24/7/365	24/7 (with Plus and Premium plans)	24/7/365	24/7/365

Add-On Solutions

Integrated Payments	\bigcirc	O		O	Ø
Inventory Management		\bigcirc	(limited capabilities)		
Labor Management & Staff Scheduling		\bigcirc		\bigcirc	(basic staff management, but no scheduling tools)
Online Ordering		\bigcirc		\bigcirc	
Integrated Delivery		\bigcirc	\checkmark		\bigotimes
Back Office Management			\bigotimes	$\boldsymbol{\otimes}$	\bigotimes
Integrated Reservations	I	\bigcirc	×	\bigotimes	×
Gift Cards	\checkmark	\checkmark			S
Loyalty and Customer Relationship Management	S	\bigcirc		\bigcirc	S
Self-Serve Kiosks	\bigotimes	\bigcirc	×	\checkmark	v
Kitchen Display System	\bigcirc	\bigcirc	\checkmark	\bigcirc	
Customer Facing Display	\bigcirc	\bigcirc		\bigcirc	\bigcirc
Digital Menu Board	\bigotimes	\bigotimes	×		\bigotimes
Marketing	\checkmark	\bigcirc	\bigcirc	\bigotimes	\checkmark

Lightspeed	SpotOn	Lavu	Epos Now
POS System: Cloud-based	POS System: Cloud-based	POS System: Cloud-based (locally installed connection costs an additional fee)	POS System: Cloud-based
Operating System: iOS	Operating System: Windows	Operating System: iOS	Operating System: iOS, Android, and Windows
Available in: CAD, U.S., MX, Europe	Available in: U.S.	Available in: U.S. and MX	Available in: U.K., IE, CAD, U.S., MX, and more
Hardware: iPads	Hardware: Proprietary Windows tablets	Hardware: iPads	Hardware: Android tablets, or PCs

Core POS Features

Menu Management				\bigcirc
Staff Management		O	(limited capabilities)	Ø
Floor Plan Management		•	O	O
Tableside Ordering			O	
Reporting		O	O	\bigcirc
1:1 Onboarding			\bigotimes	\checkmark
Customer Support	24/7	24/7/365	24/7/365	24/7 (support is an additional fee)

Add-On Solutions

Integrated Payments				
Inventory Management			(only basic inventory management features)	
Labor Management & Staff Scheduling			\mathbf{x}	\mathbf{x}
Online Ordering				
Integrated Delivery	S		×	×
Back Office Management		\checkmark	\checkmark	\mathbf{x}
Integrated Reservations	\mathbf{x}			(for call-in bookings only)
Gift Cards			\bigcirc	\mathbf{x}
Loyalty and Customer Relationship Management	0	O	O	\bigotimes
Self-Serve Kiosks				×
Kitchen Display Systems	S	~	\bigcirc	\checkmark
Customer Facing Display	S	\bigcirc	\bigcirc	\checkmark
Digital Menu Board	×	×	\bigcirc	\bigotimes
Marketing	~		\mathbf{X}	\bigotimes

Integration Partners	TouchBistro	Toast	Square for Restaurants	Revel	Clover
Online Ordering and Delivery	\bigcirc	\bigcirc	O	\bigcirc	\bigcirc
Reservations	(in-house solution)	\bigcirc	O	\mathbf{x}	\bigcirc
Customer Relationship Management and Loyalty	(in-house solution)	\bigcirc		•	\bigcirc
Staff Management, HR, and Payroll	O	\bigcirc	O	⊘	0
Inventory Management					\bigcirc
Accounting	\bigcirc	Ø		O	\bigcirc
Reporting and Analytics		\bigcirc			\bigcirc
Ecommerce	×	\bigotimes	O	O	\bigcirc

Payments Pricing Model	Fixed rate and interchange plus pricing	Fixed rate and cost plus (interchange plus) pricing	Fixed rate pricing	Fixed rate pricing	Fixed rate pricing	
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Software Pricing

Starting at \$69 USD	Starter Kit:	Free Plan:	Starting at	Clover Payments:
/ month for	\$0 USD / month	\$0 / month (limited	\$99 USD	\$0 USD / month
a single license		capabilities)	per terminal /	
	Point of Sale:		month	Clover Register Lite:
Tiered pricing	starting at \$69 USD	Plus Plan:		\$9.95 USD / month
(cost decreases	/ month	\$60 USD per	Custom quote	
for each		location / month	pricing also	Register:
additional license)	Custom:		available	\$39.95 USD / month
	custom pricing	+ \$40 USD / month		
		for additional		Counter Service Restaurant:
		terminals		\$54.95 USD / month
		Premium Plan:		Table Service Restaurant:
		custom pricing		\$84.95 USD / month

Integration Partners	Lightspeed	SpotOn	Lavu	Epos Now
Online Ordering and Delivery	\bigcirc		\bigcirc	\bigcirc
Reservations	\bigcirc	(in-house solution)	\bigcirc	\bigcirc
Customer Relationship Management and Loyalty	\bigcirc	(in-house solution)	\checkmark	\bigcirc
Staff Management, HR, and Payroll	\bigcirc	O	O	\bigcirc
Inventory Management	\checkmark			\checkmark
Accounting	\bigcirc	\bigcirc	O	\bigcirc
Reporting and Analytics	\bigcirc	\bigcirc	\bigcirc	\bigcirc
Ecommerce	(in-house solution)	(in-house solution)	\bigotimes	\bigcirc
Payment Solutions	\bigcirc	\bigcirc	\bigcirc	\bigcirc

Payments Pricing Model	Fixed rate pricing	Fixed rate pricing	Fixed rate pricing	Varies based on payment processor
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Software Pricing

CAD Pricing: Essentials : \$239 Premium: \$499 USD Pricing: Essentials : \$189 Premium: \$399	SpotOn Counter Service: \$99 / month \$3 / employee / month Full Service: \$135 / month \$3 / employee / month Customize Your Own: Custom pricing	Starter: \$59 USD / month Growth: \$129 USD / month Optimize: \$279 USD / month	Starting at \$39 USD / month (pricing varies based on number of locations and number of devices needed) Enterprise: Price available with quote
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The Ultimate Guide to the Best Restaurant POS Systems







To ensure you end up with the perfect POS system for your restaurant, make sure to consider the following before you pull the trigger:

What's your budget?

Don't just budget for monthly software fees. Think about all the costs involved in purchasing a new restaurant POS, including set up, installation, payment processing, and all the necessary hardware.

Are you quick service, full service, or something else?

Different POS systems work better for different types of restaurants. Whether you're a fine dining restaurant or a brewery and bottle shop, the type of business you run will dictate the features you need, your hardware setup, and more.







What are your payment processing needs?

Not every POS system will integrate with every payment processor. Make sure you understand which processors work with the POS system you're purchasing. And if you're using a provider's integrated payments solution, be on the lookout for any hidden "junk" fees that may be passed on to you or your customers.

What can you expect in terms of implementation, customer support, and ROI?

Beyond the nuts and bolts, you should consider the people behind the POS system you're buying and what you can expect in terms of support.

ROI is also important because you should be thinking of your POS system as a way to streamline and optimize operations in a way that will ultimately have a measurable impact on your restaurant's bottom line.

What are your longterm business goals?

Your POS system should not only support your current needs, but also your future goals. Consider your long-term business plan and make sure your POS will be able to scale with you. The Ultimate Guide to the Best Restaurant POS Systems

Why Choose TouchBistro?

TouchBistro is so much more than a point of sale (POS). TouchBistro is an all-in-one POS and restaurant management system that enables operators to take care of their guests and grow their businesses.

Designed exclusively with restaurant and hospitality businesses in mind, TouchBistro provides the most essential front of house, back of house, and guest engagement solutions on one easy-to-use platform.

16,000+ restaurants powered**100+** countries**\$14** billion processed annually

Why Restaurants Love TouchBistro

Expert and Peer-Recommended

TouchBistro is consistently rated 4.5+ stars out of 5 by G2, Merchant Maverick, Capterra, and more.

Real-Time Cloud Reporting

Equipped with more than 50 cloud-based reports, TouchBistro gives you instant access to the insights you need.

Zero Downtime

Our offline mode allows your devices to continue talking to each other, even when your internet goes down, so service is never interrupted.

Round-the-Clock Support

Get up and running quickly with our one-box POS solution and enjoy the peace of mind of 24/7 locally-based support, available 365 days of the year



"I've worked in the industry for many years, with countless other POS systems, but TouchBistro beats them all. The constant improvements and great customer support make them come out on top."

Salsa Salsa Smithtown, Christopher Pittsley, Kings Park, NY

Want to see TouchBistro in action?





