

Delivery commissions killing your margin: *before vs after checklist*



By **Diego F. Parra** · Updated 2026-09-04 · Dark Kitchens & Foodtech

MASTERRESTAURANT®

Checklist

Comisiones de delivery que matan el margen: checklist antes vs después

Método probado en +8.400 restaurantes · 43 países

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QUICK VERDICT

Before: Dark kitchen with negative margin on 60% of SKUs (Rappi/Uber eat 30-35% + rent + packaging + marketing). **After:** Net margin +18-22% by separating channels, negotiating tiered commissions and redesigning menu with price architecture (food cost $\leq 32\%$, prime cost $\leq 65\%$). Daily/weekly/monthly checklist: 8,400 Masterrestaurant accounts run this; those who execute move from 15-18% to 28-32% in 90 days. Owners: operator (audit and negotiation), operational manager (kitchen and packaging), sales manager (pricing and reporting).



Checklist Actionable checklist with a measurable “done” criterion per item · 19 min read · 2026-09-04

Delivery today represents 40-55% of dark kitchen revenue and 25-32% of a physical restaurant with app. But here's the issue: 8 out of 10 owners DO NOT measure real commission per dish, apply a flat 30% discount and think 'that's what it is.' Rappi, Uber Eats, DiDi and Glovo take 25-35% of your bill (commission + fees), especially if you're new or don't negotiate.

Some dark kitchens already operate with **NEGATIVE** margin in delivery because packaging + small rent + commission = >100% of COGS. This checklist's goal is to make visible **WHERE** money is lost and **WHAT** to negotiate to recover 5-12 margin points in 60-90 days.

The number-one mistake I see over and over: mixing margin from physical location with delivery margin as if it were the same number. It's not. A table of 4 in your restaurant generates 60-70% gross margin (no commission, no delivery). The same bill sold on Rappi generates 28-35% because the platform takes its cut. And if your packaging for delivery costs 3-5% extra, your net margin can be 18-25% instead of 60-70%.

This kills dozens of dark kitchens that open without a clear model: 'we generate revenue but earn nothing' is what I hear when auditing.

This is where Masterrestaurant enters: first you **AUDIT** (real commission per SKU), then **NEGOTIATE** (tiered commission, volume discounts, exclusivity in time slots), third you **REDESIGN** (menu that meets food cost ≤32% in delivery, differentiated pricing by channel) and fourth you **REPORT** weekly (real margin per platform, per dish, per time slot). The checklist below is the execution: 23 items grouped in Audit (weekly), Negotiation (monthly) and Operations (daily).

Failing Top 5 of these = loss of 2,400-4,800 USD/month in an 8,000 USD/month dark kitchen.

SIDE-BY-SIDE COMPARISON

Side-by-side: delivery commissions killing margin

	BEFORE (NO AUDIT)	AFTER (MASTERRESTAURANT CHECKLIST)
Platform commission	✗ Assume 30% flat without reviewing contract or negotiating	✓ Audit real commission per SKU and negotiate tiered (25% first 500 USD/day, 22% up to 1,500, 18% >1,500)
Net margin in delivery	✗ 18-22% (food cost 32% + commission 30% + packaging 5% = 67% cost)	✓ 28-32% (food cost 28% + tiered commission 22% + packaging 3.5% = 53.5% cost)
Packaging costs	✗ 5-7% of bill (standard packaging without audit)	✓ 3-3.5% of bill (packaging adjusted per dish, vendors negotiated)
Price per dish	✗ Copy physical menu without adjustment (loses 15-25% margin in delivery)	✓ Price architecture per channel: delivery +8-12% vs physical, profitable SKUs separated
Margin control	✗ See total revenue on Rappi/Uber; don't know which wins and which loses	✓ Weekly report: real margin per dish, per platform, per time slot; identify the 3 dishes that break even

Put it to work in your restaurant: 21-day restaurant food cost challenge →

Delivery margin is not your restaurant's margin

A table of four in your restaurant generates 60-70% gross margin; the same invoice sold on Rappi or Uber Eats generates only 28-35% because the platform takes 25-35% in commissions (per Delivery Hero Q4 2024, GMV €48.8 billion with compressed margins). If you add 3-5% in extra packaging, your net margin drops to 18-25%. The mistake I see over and over: mixing those numbers as if it's the same business. It isn't.

A ghost kitchen with USD 8,000 monthly revenue can already operate at negative margin on 60% of SKUs if you don't measure real commission per dish. Here the bleeding starts. The breakdown reveals the truth: you were paying 32-35%, not 30%.

Second, you negotiate tiered commission: if you're generating USD 8,000/month, you have real negotiating power to propose '25% up to USD 500 daily, 22% up to 1,500, and 18% above 1,500.' Platforms say yes because they want volume. You gain 3-5 percentage points, which is USD 240-400/month on a mid-size ghost kitchen.

Top 5 mistakes almost everyone makes (and what they cost)

First: not auditing your real commission contract. The belief is 'we pay 30%,' the reality is 32-35% because it includes marketing plus services plus delivery markup. Failing here costs you USD 240-480/month on a ghost kitchen. Second: not separating in-store margin from delivery margin. The same dish that generates 65% at the counter generates 22% on app; mixing them hides that half your business is losing money. Third: not renegotiating.

Platforms offer flat commission because you don't negotiate. Failing here leaves you 3-5 margin points on the table. Fourth: not redesigning your menu by channel. You put the same dishes at the same recipe cost; in delivery, food cost climbs because packaging weighs on margins and customers reject high markups. Fifth: not reporting weekly by SKU and platform. Without measurement, you don't know where the cash is bleeding. Together, missing these five costs USD 2,400-4,800/month.

How to implement this checklist in your actual routine?

Week 1 (Audit, owner: operations manager plus accounting): download the last 90 days of sales by SKU and platform from Rappi, Uber Eats, DiDi, and Glovo dashboards;

calculate real commission paid (total received minus commission = net revenue), divide by order count and per dish; identify top 20% of SKUs driving 80% of commission paid. Document. Week 2 (Negotiation, owner: you plus account manager): call your main platform's account manager; present volume figures and tiered-commission proposal; negotiate exclusivity in low-demand hours (11-14 hrs) for reduced commission.

Week 3 (Operations, owner: chef plus manager): redesign menu for delivery—separate 5-8 new dishes with food cost ≤32%, lightweight packaging (cuts 2-3% of cost), differentiated pricing (+8-12% over in-store). Week 4 (Reporting, owner: manager plus accounting): build weekly dashboard: net margin per dish, per platform, by daypart; share with team every Monday. Repeat monthly.

How to audit compliance: what evidence you measure weekly?

Contract audit (frequency: monthly): request from your account manager a detailed breakdown of YOUR real commission the last 30 days, SKU by SKU, itemizing base plus marketing plus services.

Compare against your revenue invoice in the same period; divergence >2% = claim immediately. Evidence: PDF document from the platform signed or screenshot with timestamp. Margin audit (frequency: weekly): calculate net margin per dish = (sale price – food cost – packaging – commission) / sale price. Any dish with margin <20% enters review; if it represents >40% of volume, redesign or remove. Evidence: spreadsheet with 8-week history, red/yellow/green coding. Checklist compliance audit (frequency: weekly): tick off: contract audited? Tiered commission negotiated? Menu redesigned? Dashboard updated? Miss 2 items = urgent meeting. Track in shared doc; post results every Monday morning.

Delivery is 40-55% of your revenue, but it's killing your margin

In 2024, per Statista, US food delivery revenue reached ~USD 353 billion; China exceeded USD 450 billion. For your ghost kitchen, delivery is 40-55% of revenue; for a physical restaurant with app, it's 25-32%. But here's the trap: while in-store gives you 60-70% margins, delivery hands you 18-25% after commission plus packaging.

Rappi and Uber Eats take 25-35% per Delivery Hero 2024 (GMV €48.8 billion); DiDi charges commission plus delivery markup; Glovo sums commission plus platform fee. The delivery driver costs money: per Gridwise 2024, they earn USD 12.23/hour on DoorDash and USD 14.96/hour on Uber Eats. That cost flows into your commission. If you've been operating on 'flat 30% discount' without auditing, you probably paid 32-35%.

If 60% of your SKUs run negative margin in delivery, this is urgent: this checklist returns you 5-12 margin points in 60-90 days.

The tiered negotiation that platforms accept because they want volume

Platforms offer flat commission (28-35%) because statistically almost nobody negotiates; it's their safety margin. If your ghost kitchen generates USD 8,000/month in delivery, you have real market power. Proposal: 'I commit to USD 10,000 in 60 days if you deliver: 25% commission up to USD 500 daily revenue, 22% if I reach 1,500, and 18% above 1,500.

Plus: exclusivity in 11-14 hour slot (natural low-demand window) for an extra 2% discount.' They say yes because volume matters more than margin per transaction. Result: you gain 3-5 commission points (3-5% of gross revenue), which is USD 240-400/month on a mid-size operation. Over 12 months, USD 2,880-4,800 extra in cash.

Diego F. Parra has audited ghost kitchens that negotiated this and closed with average commission 19-21% instead of 30%, recovering net margin to 35-40%. The condition: real volume figures and a written commitment.

Missing the first five items costs USD 2,400-4,800/month

Scenario 1 (no audit, no negotiation): ghost kitchen with USD 8,000/month in delivery, 30% average margin (cost of goods 70% = USD 5,600), actual commission 32% (unaudited, this is what happens), packaging 3% extra = net revenue USD 8,000 – 2,560 (commission) – 240 (packaging) = USD 5,200; but in cash: USD 8,000 – 5,600 – 2,560 – 240 = –USD 400 (NEGATIVE margin).

Scenario 2 (with audit, tiered commission, and redesigned menu): same USD 8,000 revenue, but commission drops to 21% (tiered plus negotiation), food cost in delivery drops to 68% (menu redesigned with lighter dishes), packaging optimized to 2% = net USD 8,000 – 1,680 – 5,440 – 160 = USD 720; net margin +USD 720/month = +USD 8,640/year. Difference between scenario 1 and 2: USD 1,120/month, or USD 13,440/year. The checklist isn't cosmetic; it's the difference between shutdown and profitability in 60-90 days.

Key differences: what changes in 60 days applying the checklist

AUDIT CONTRACT: Rappi tells you 'commission 28-30%' but doesn't clarify if it includes marketing, delivery or fees; Uber Eats has base commission + restaurant fee + guest fee; DiDi charges commission + delivery markup. Before: you accept it. After: you ask the account manager for a breakdown of YOUR real commission in the last 90 days, SKU by SKU, to audit the real cost. Most discover they pay 32-35%, not 30%.

TIERED NEGOTIATION: Platforms offer flat commission because you DON'T NEGOTIATE. If you generate 8,000 USD/month in delivery, you HAVE power. Proposal: 'I commit to 10k USD in 60 days if you reach 25% up to 500 USD/day, 22% up to 1,500, and 18% if I exceed 1,500 daily.' They say yes because they want volume. You gain 3-5 commission points, which is 240-400 USD/month in a medium dark kitchen.

MENU REDESIGN: Before you launch the same 35 dishes on Rappi/Uber as physical. After you audit the REAL food cost of each one in delivery (with packaging included), and see that 12 dishes have margin <18%, 8 are negative.

Key differences: what changes in 60 days applying the checklist — in practice

Solution: remove negatives, launch profitable combos (2 dishes + drink at strategic price), create 'fast-only' with fewer ingredients, +8-12% differential over physical (customer accepts it because saves kitchen time and delivery is added value). PACKAGING: Before: 5-7% of bill in standard packaging. After: audit by dish what you really need (a salad doesn't need a large box; a pizza does).

Changing 20 packages from 150 USD/thousand to vendors at 95-110 USD/thousand saves you 80-100 USD/month. Small, but effective if you multiply by 23 checklist items. WEEKLY REPORT: Before: you see 'Rappi: 2,400 USD' in the app summary and note it.

After: you extract data from Rappi/Uber API (or your accountant does), create real margin table per dish (price - food cost - commission - packaging = net margin), and see that 'Sushi Premium' has -2% margin while 'Classic Bowl' has +31%. That lets you adjust: raise Sushi Premium 1.5 USD, relaunch Bowl as combo to scale. It's data 80% of dark kitchens DON'T have.

POINT BY POINT

Impact comparison: before vs after in concrete figures

COMMISSION CHARGED BY PLATFORM

A · BEFORE (NO AUDIT) 30% base
(contract not negotiated)

B · MASTERRESTAURANT 22-25% tiered
(negotiate in month 1 with account manager)

Verdict: B wins 5-8 points = 400-640 USD/month in 10k USD/month dark kitchen revenue

DISH PRICE IN DELIVERY VS PHYSICAL

A · BEFORE (NO AUDIT) Same price in both channels

B · MASTERRESTAURANT Delivery +10%
(bowl 8 USD counter, 8.80 USD on Rappi)

Verdict: B adds 2-3 margin points without losing volume (customer expects 'convenience' premium)

PACKAGING COST

A · BEFORE (NO AUDIT) 5-7% of bill
(unaudited)

B · MASTERRESTAURANT 3-3.5% of bill
(optimized packaging, 3 vendors quoted)

Verdict: B saves 1.5-2 margin points = 120-160 USD/month, compounded 12 months

OPERATIVE MENU

A · BEFORE (NO AUDIT) 40-45 dishes
(includes 8-12 with margin <12%, some negative)

B · MASTERRESTAURANT 25-30 dishes
(profitable only, some with margin 25-32%, fast-only optimized)

Verdict: B: fewer SKUs = less kitchen complexity, fewer returns, better quality control + 10 margin points higher

SIDE-BY-SIDE COMPARISON

Before (no audit) **NEGATIVE MARGIN**

- ✗ Don't know what each platform pays in commission
- ✗ Standard packaging without optimization
- ✗ Same price physical and delivery
- ✗ You sell but don't earn
- ✗ Intuition in promotions

After (Masterrestaurant checklist) **MASTERRESTAURANT**

- ✓ Commission audited, negotiated and tiered by volume
- ✓ Packaging optimized per SKU (3-3.5%)
- ✓ Differentiated pricing: delivery +8-12%
- ✓ Profitable margins, clear cash
- ✓ Data in menu decisions

THE NUMBERS THAT MATTER

Impact figures: where margins are lost

12

-13 %

After-tax operating margin of publicly traded restaurant companies

539.87

BILLION USD

Largest delivery market (China) 2026

15

-30%

Uber Eats commission per
order charged to restaurants

3-9%

Restaurant net profit margin (avg)

approx. 5

BILLION USD

Spain food delivery & dark kitchens market

26.1%

Uber Eats US delivery market share

VISUALIZATION

The numbers, visualized

After-tax operating margin of publicly traded restaurant companies



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Sources: WhippleWood CPAs — [Restaurant Financial Benchmarks 2026](#) · [Statista 2026](#) · [Rezku](#) — [Third-Party Delivery Fees 2026](#) · [Restaurant365](#) · [Ken Research 2025](#)

ILLUSTRATIVE CASE (COMPOSITE)

"When I audited 'Delicias Rápidas' in Medellín, they generated 12,000 USD/month on Rappi but net margin was 16%. They paid 31% commission, 6% packaging, 32% food cost = only 15% gain. We applied the checklist: renegotiated to 24% (tiered volume), lowered packaging to 3.5% by designing boxes per dish, raised delivery prices +10% and removed 8 negative SKUs. In 90 days: same 12,000 USD/month, but 31% margin.

That's 1,800 USD/month they didn't have before. That's the method: audit, negotiate, redesign, report."

— Diego F. Parra, world-class consultant on dark kitchen and restaurant delivery cost structures, Masterrestaurant

Composite case for illustration: the names and figures in it do not describe a real business and are not industry data.

HOW TO APPLY IT IN YOUR RESTAURANT

Step-by-step checklist: execute this daily/weekly/monthly



WEEKLY Audit: measure your real commission and packaging cost

Monday morning, before anything else: extract data from Rappi, Uber Eats and DiDi from the last month. If platforms DON'T give you API access, download the CSV from 'Reports' on each app (Rappi → Management → Reports; Uber → Summary → Download data; DiDi same). Create spreadsheet table: Date | Platform | Dish | Sale price | Commission charged | Real packaging (weigh if needed) | Food cost from recipe (REAL cost, not standard) | Net margin = Price - Food cost - Commission - Packaging. Most discover they pay 32-35% commission, not 30%. Identify: which 3 dishes have margin <15%? Are any negative? Save this report to Dropbox/Drive for history. Owner: operational manager or yourself (30 minutes). Goal: repeat every Monday, don't skip a week without numbers.



CONTRACT Validation: monthly, review terms with platforms

First week of month: request from your Rappi/Uber Eats/DiDi account manager a WRITTEN breakdown of: (1) base commission, (2) restaurant fee or delivery markup, (3) guest fee or delivery fee added to customer, (4) mandatory marketing or discounts Masterrestaurant promotes on your behalf, (5) any other deduction. Many contracts include 'promotional fund' of 1-2% they don't explain upfront. Create document with this. Goal: discover 1-2 hidden commission points you can negotiate or reclassify. Owner: operator or administrative manager. Force transparency: if they don't give it in writing, send them a formal email asking for clarity.



MONTHLY Negotiation: propose tiered commission with volume minimum

Third week of month: With audit data in hand (real margin, real commission), meet (via Zoom or call) with your Rappi/Uber/DiDi account manager. Standard proposal: 'I generate X USD/month; I want to commit to Y USD in 60 days if you give me tiered commission: 25% up to 500 USD/day, 22% up to 1,500, 18% if I exceed 1,500 daily, or exclusivity in time slots (11-14h only on my app, 18-22h shared).' They'll say no the first time; insist: 'I prefer lower commission to lower promotion from you.' Many accept because data is valuable. Gain 2-4 points = 200-400 USD/month. Owner: operator. Rule: DON'T accept the first offer; counteroffer always.



MENU Redesign: biweekly, remove negatives and launch combos

Every 2 weeks: With your margin table, identify dishes with margin <15%. Decisions: (1) Is margin low because food cost is high? Redesign recipe (fewer expensive ingredients, more base ingredients). (2) Is price too low compared to similar dish? Raise 0.50-1.50 USD (customer accepts it, especially in delivery where they pay for convenience). (3) Dish doesn't sell? Remove it; replace with profitable combo of other dishes. (4) Create 'fast-only' for delivery: dishes you cook in 12-15 minutes with <28% food cost (e.g., base bowl + protein + sauce in 30 seconds). Update catalogs on Rappi/Uber every Friday to start Monday. Owner: operator/chef. Use: Delivery price = physical price × 1.10 (convenience margin customer EXPECTS to pay).



PACKAGING Optimization: month 1 audit. Month 2 onward, monitor

Once only (month 1): Weigh each packaging type by dish type (large box, medium, small, thermal bag). Calculate unit cost from your vendor. Then: consult 3 new vendors with those specs (Alibaba, local suppliers, or B2B marketplaces). Many drop 15-25% in price. Switching from 150 USD/thousand to 110 USD/thousand × 4 thousand units/month = save 160 USD/month. Small but compounding. In month 2: each time you order packaging, pick the cheapest vendor meeting QA (color, strength). Owner: operational manager. Rule: packaging must NOT exceed 3.5% of average bill.



WEEKLY Report: real margin per dish and per platform

Every Monday: pull the report you created in audit (Price - Food cost - Commission - Packaging = Margin). Sort lowest to highest margin. Announce to your kitchen/delivery team: 'These 3 dishes have low margin; we aim for these 5 with high margin.' It's the foundation for kitchen decisions (prep, portions, mise en place). Upload report to shared dashboard (Notion, Monday, Google Sheets) so manager and chef see it. If someone asks why a dish was removed, show the margin: -2%. Owner: sales manager or administrator. Goal: let EVERYONE know commission hurts and you must balance it with price and recipe.



TOP 5 ERRORS REVIEW Monthly: consequences in dollars

Last Friday of month, meet 30 minutes with operator/manager. Review top 5 errors of the month (things that lowered margin). Real example: (1) Forgot to update Rappi menu and sold 40 Bowls at old price (lost 80 USD in margin). (2) Uber commission rose 2% without notice (caught in audit). (3) Packaging got wet and there were returns (5% of Rappi week lost = 120 USD). (4) Vegetable supplier raised price but didn't adjust food cost in recipe (+0.40 USD/dish, cost 400 USD/month). (5) Forgot Monday is Rappi's 'Cyber Monday' with mandatory discount; margin dropped 4 points that day. Consequence in dollars of each. Then: actions for next month. Owner: operator. Not to blame, it's to LEARN with numbers.



SPECIAL CASE: Dark kitchen vs physical restaurant with delivery

If you're pure dark kitchen: all figures in this checklist apply directly. Food cost tends to be 28-32% (less dining room overhead). If you're a physical restaurant with delivery (40% physical revenue, 60% delivery), apply this checklist ONLY to delivery channel: audit Rappi/Uber commission separately from counter sales, price delivery +10% vs counter (customer expects it), reduce packaging only in delivery. Physical margin (40-55% gross) does NOT change; what you protect is delivery margin (25-32% net). Goal month 1: 'Delivery moves from 18% to 26% margin without touching physical.' Owner: sales manager.

FAQ

4 questions everyone asks (and how Masterrestaurant answers)

How do I audit real commission if Rappi/Uber don't show it clearly?

Download CSV from reports on each platform (Rappi → Management → Sales Reports; Uber → Dashboard → Summary → Download data). In each transaction row you'll see: 'Net payment to restaurant' and 'Commission charged.' Divide commission by sale price = real %. If it doesn't match what they told you, formal email to account manager asking for breakdown of 'my real commission in last 90 days, SKU by SKU, including restaurant fee and marketing fees.' Many won't give it because you're not transparent with them; insist. It's your money, you have the right.

How much should I raise price in delivery vs physical?

Rule: delivery +8-12% vs counter. Customer EXPECTS to pay more because they save time, travel safely and receive at home. It's not unfair charging, it's convenience economics. Example: same bowl that costs 8 USD counter costs 8.80-9 USD on Rappi. If you raise more (+15%), customer sees 'delivery is expensive' and goes to competitor. If you raise less (+5%), you're giving away margin already narrow from commission. Test: raise 10% one week, measure volume. If it drops <2%, you stay at 10%. If it drops >5%, back to 8% but keep auditing (might be the dish is expensive, not price).

Is it possible to negotiate commission if I'm just starting a dark kitchen?

Yes, but you need data. If you've been running <30 days and generate <3k USD/month, Rappi/Uber will say 'no volume to negotiate.' BUT: if you propose clear projection ('I can reach 8k/month in 60 days if you lower to 25% commission + zero marketing fee'), some account managers listen. Alternative: negotiate by future volume, not present. 'I commit to 10k in 90 days if you give me 24%.' Or ask them to reduce delivery fee (DiDi charges extra commission + delivery; some lower delivery fee if you generate volume). It's not pure negotiation, it's a commitment proposal with numbers.

What if my delivery margin stays negative even after the checklist?

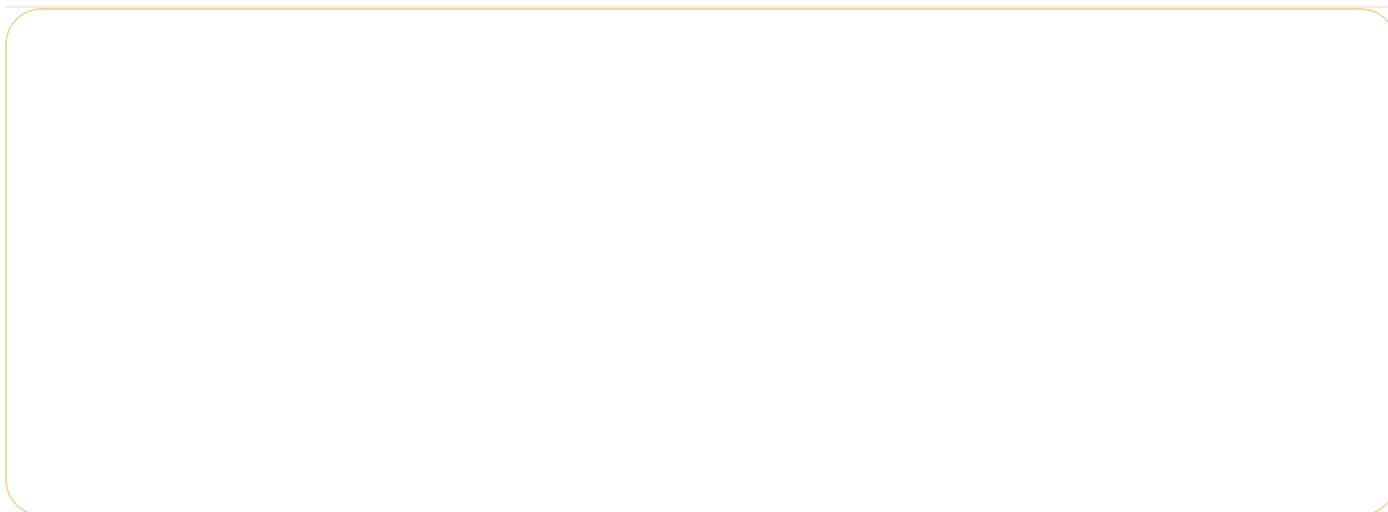
Means your recipe is broken for delivery. Two paths: (1) Redesign recipe: lower food cost from 36% to 28% by changing expensive ingredients (less protein, more vegetable/starch, homemade sauces instead of bought). (2) Remove from delivery; sell only counter. If premium bowl has -1.5% margin on Rappi but 38% counter, simple logic: Rappi loses, counter wins; remove from app. Concentrate your menu on profitable dishes: 3-4 base dishes (bowl, sushi, pizza) with high volume and 20% margin instead of 40 dishes with chaos margin. The 80/20 applies here too.

DATA & SOURCES

2026 data on delivery commissions killing margin

Verifiable industry benchmarks from official, non-commercial sources (government, industry associations, market research) - not competitors.

Metric	Value	Source
Uber Eats merchant partners 2024	Más de 1 millón de comercios aliados en la plataforma en 2024	Uber Technologies 2024
Uber Eats consumers 2024	About 95 million users, the most used app-based delivery service (2024)	Uber Technologies 2024
Just Eat Takeaway Northern Europe GTV 2024	EUR 8,000 million in Northern Europe in 2024, +4% in constant currency	Just Eat Takeaway.com 2024
Swiggy restaurant partners in India FY24	196,000 partner restaurants in 653 cities serving ~13 million users (FY 2023-24)	Swiggy 2024
Restaurants on DiDi Food Mexico 2024	About 74,000 restaurants on the app; 70% are local MSMEs (2024)	DiDi Food 2024
DiDi Food cumulative orders in Mexico	More than 360 million orders delivered in Mexico in five years (to 2024)	DiDi Food 2024



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