

	Subject: North America Barcode Requirements	Effective Date: November 2, 2025
	Owner: Product Manager, NA IT	Supersedes Policy Dated: February 9, 2022
	Type: Complete Revision () Partial Revision (x) New ()	Approved By: Director, Information Technology

North American Barcode Requirements

This document specifies the minimum requirements for barcoding products to be received by Gordon Food Service, based on GS1 guidelines. It is designed to be used only in conjunction with, not a substitute for, the specification manuals available through GS1. The requirements in this document apply to all products supplied to Gordon Food Service. **Failure to meet these minimum barcode requirements may result in an administration fee that will be automatically deducted.**

The current [GS1 General Specifications](#) are the standard we use for these requirements. Gordon Food Service recommends obtaining this document from GS1. The GS1 General Specification contains principles of the GS1 system, definitions of the application identifiers, their format, application rules, information on the various data carriers, barcode placement guidelines, as well as a glossary of terms.

Gordon Food Service Private-Brand Suppliers

For vendors that supply Gordon Food Service with any of our Gordon Food Service private-branded products, we will supply the vendor with our GTIN for all levels of packaging for those items.

Obtaining a GS1 Company Prefix for National/Regional Brand Products

For vendors that currently do not have a GS1 company prefix, it will be the vendor's responsibility to join GS1 and be assigned a number to use. If your company is based in the United States, contact [GS1 US](#). If your company is based in Canada, contact [GS1 Canada](#). Otherwise, contact the appropriate GS1 Member Organization Office <http://www.gs1.org/contact>.

Pallet labeling

Include pallet tags that reference all traceability lot codes (TLC) in a pallet (e.g., GS1 Serial Shipping Container Code (SSCC)) and identify all mixed pallets (i.e. pallets with multiple TLC lots).

Global Trade Item Number (GTIN) on outer case

Gordon Food Service requires all products to have a GTIN-14 on each case using a 1D or 2D barcode that meets the GS1 Sunrise 2027 requirements. Random-weight products are required to encode the weight in that barcode. If any additional information, such as production dates, lot numbers, etc., are required, they must also be embedded in the barcode. The vendor or the vendor's packaging supplier will need to print this barcode on the case exterior in accordance with size, location, and printing specifications set forth by GS1 in the GS1 General Specification document.

Note - for Gordon Food Service US only: All Gordon Food Service private-branded items require the 6-digit Gordon Food Service item code be clearly marked on the exterior of the case in addition to the GTIN.

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GTIN on inner or retail-ready packages

Gordon Food Service requires all products have a GTIN appear on all individual selling units or inner packages that are labeled for retail sale. This should be an EAN/UPC barcode using the UPC-A or EAN-13 barcodes. It is the vendor's responsibility along with the vendor's packaging supplier to print the EAN/UPC for each product on the inner pack in accordance with size, location, and printing specifications set forth by GS1 in the GS1 General Specification document.

Gordon Food Service requires the use of a 1D or 2D barcode for all random weight items which follows the GS1 "*Voluntary GS1-128 Barcode Guideline for Cases/Cartons in the Foodservice Industry*". Gordon Food Service also encourages the use of a 1D or 2D barcode with the dating information embedded in them for items having production or sell by dating on them.

Random Weight Example

For an item that has a GTIN of 90093901523320, a production date of August 26, 2020, and a net weight in pounds of 42.15 lbs. the human readable data should be displayed as:

(01)90093901523320(11)200826(3202)004215

The data should be encoded in the barcode symbol as follows:

0190093901523320112008263202004215

The format for each data element in the barcode must follow GS1 guidelines. For example, weight is encoded as (n4+n6), where n4 represents that the application identifier is numeric and four in length, followed by numeric data that is 6 in length. For weight fields, the last digit of the AI represents the number of decimals of precision.

FDA Food Safety Modernization Act - Traceability Rule

Food products that are on the FDA's Food Traceability List, and fall under the Food Safety Modernization Act's Traceability Rule are required to use the GS1-128 barcode or other data carrier that encodes the traceability lot code (TLC) such as Data Matrix code. We encourage the use of GS1's "*Application of GS1 System of Standards to Support FSMA 204*" guidance document that can be found on their website. This is critical, as GFS will be using this labeling to ensure our compliance to the rule on the outbound side.

The Importance of Case Scannability

It is highly recommended, if you're new to barcoding, that you send several samples to a barcode verification provider for scan verification. In addition, be sure to request feedback on compliance with foodservice requirements. A list of barcode verification providers can be found on the GS1 ([US](#) or [Canada](#)) website.

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Common Pitfalls to Avoid

- Red or orange ink is unacceptable. Black ink on a white background is preferred.
- Packing tape or anything else that covers any area of the barcode is not allowed.
- If the barcode is printed on a label, and the label wraps from one side of a case to another, sufficient space must be provided pre- & post- barcode so that the barcode does not appear on the seam of the package.
- The barcode symbol must meet the GS1 standards spelled out in the GS1 US Barcode compatibility test kit.
- The GTIN on inner packs may not be used on the shipping container (master case).
- The barcode must appear on a minimum of one side and preferably on two adjacent sides of the case. For Gordon Food Service private-branded products, it is a requirement for the barcode to appear on two adjacent sides of the case.
- If barcode is applied via inkjet directly to the corrugate, the bars on the code must be straight, clear, and scannable.
- If using a GS1-128 barcode, the order of the AI placement can vary, but Gordon Food Service recommends that GTIN be encoded first, followed by the date information and finally the weight information.
- The human readable interpretation of the data in the barcode symbol must be shown below the symbol. Application identifiers should be clearly recognizable to facilitate key entry. This is achieved by putting parentheses around application identifiers in the human readable interpretation. The parentheses are not a part of the data and are not encoded in the barcode symbol. (Section 4.14 of the GS1 General Specification)
- If using a GS1-128 barcode, additional application identifiers other than the ones Gordon Food Service requires, such as batch, lot or serial numbers, may be used as long as the total barcode length does not exceed 48 characters and 6.5 inches. (Section 5.4.7.3 of the GS1 General Specification)
- If using a GS1-128 barcode, any variable-length application identifiers, such as batch numbers, must be encoded last (after the Gordon Food Service required application identifiers.) (Section 5.10.2.2. of the GS1 General Specification)
- If using a GS1-128 barcode, pay close attention that it follows the GS1 specification format, such as length of the data fields with fixed length, correct application identifiers and correct formatting.

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For More Information

GS1 US

Website: GS1US

Email: info@gs1us.org

Customer Service: +1 937.435.3870

GS1 Canada

Website: [GS1 Canada](http://GS1Canada)

Email: info@gs1ca.org

Customer Service: +1 416.510.8039

Additional resources from GS1 under the “Industries and Insights” [Foodservice](#) section:

- Foodservice Implementation resources:
 - Guidelines
 - North American Industry Implementation Guidance for Standard Case Code Labeling
 - Foodservice Implementation Guideline for Case-Level Traceability Using GS1 Standards
 - Implementation Resources
 - Implementation Checklist for Manufacturers
- **GS1 US Getting Started Guide** - Step by step instruction on getting started with barcoding.
- **Foodservice Voluntary GS1-128 Barcode Guideline** - This document contains the requirements for use of the GS1-128 barcode.
- [Barcodes & Identification](#) - Contains helpful information including links to a check digit calculator, a barcode implementation guide, barcode FAQ, glossary, and more.
- [GS1 General Specification](#) - additional information about the GS1 General Specification.
- **Global Trade Item Number (GTIN) - An Introduction**—This document is available for download from the GS1 barcode site.
- [Application of GS1 System of Standards to Support FSMA 204](#) - This document contains best practices for using GS1 standards to efficiently pass data between business partners and ensure compliance to the FDA Food Traceability Final Rule.