

FREE! Maxim's Perfect 10 Mini-Mag

# MAXIM

## food

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# Got Balls?\*

MEET THE LATEST IN RETRO-COOL MAN-FOOD: MEATBALLS.

### \* REJECTED HEADLINES FOR THIS STORY

BOYS MEAT BALLS

TWO BALLS ONE RECIPE

MEATBALLS DEEP

GASSY WITH A CHANCE OF MEATBALLS

STRAIGHT BALLIN'

THE MAGIC ATE BALL

PLAY BALLS!

FEEL DEEZ NUTS

HOW MEAT IT IS

SAVED BY THE BALLS

➤ **What is the manliest meat?** A dino-size porterhouse? A barbecued pork shoulder? A five-alarm chicken wing? Before you say yes to any of those, consider the humble meatball, a spherical mash-up of savory wonder. You don't have to be an expert chef to make them: All you need are two hands and some ground-up animal. If you can make a snowball, you can make dinner.

Yes, friends, we are living in the age of the meatball. Increasingly, chefs around the country are celebrating this simple peasant food, dressing it up with fancy ingredients or stripping it down to its essence for a satisfying taste of home. Lamb, lobster, foie gras, even Kobe beef—if you can grind it up, there's a chef somewhere turning it into a meatball.

But no one has boiled this trend down better than the guys behind New York City's Meatball Shop: Daniel Holzman, chef, and Michael Chernow, general manager. Their bustling nine-month-old restaurant, a 39-seat spot nestled amid the bars and latenight lounges of the Lower East Side, serves one thing and one thing only: meatballs. (OK, there are some vegetable sides, but that's it.)

Ravenous diners can choose from four types of two-ounce balls: beef, pork, chicken, and, for heathens, veggie. Get them "naked" (four balls in a bowl with one of four sauces: classic tomato, spicy meat, Parmesan cream, or mushroom gravy) or in sandwich form with melted mozzarella or provolone. Everything on the menu is less than 10 bucks, including daily specials like the "jambalaya ball," crammed with shrimp, chicken, andouille, and pork. It's Mardi Gras in your mouth!

The appeal, according to Holzman, is simple. "People don't cook anymore," he says. ➤➤

**Sex**  
**SHE'LL**  
**THANK**  
**YOU FOR**  
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**WE'VE GOT**  
**Balls**

**NBA**  
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IN AMERICA



## BETTER KNOW YOUR BALLS

EVER WANTED TO ENTER A MEATBALL TRIVIA CONTEST? NOW YOU CAN.

### LEFTOVERS RULE

Like many of Mom's best meals, meatballs were born of stinginess. Peasants in early cultures would roll bits of meat with grains, nuts, and fruits to make it last longer.

### FOR THE BIRDS

The earliest recorded recipes for meatballs date to ancient Rome. A common ingredient? Peacock.

### MO' MONEY, MO' MEAT

At \$30 the one-pound Kobe beef ball at Miami's Prime Italian is the most expensive ball short of a Lance Armstrong prosthetic.

### OPEN WIDE

In 2005 competitive eater Sonya Thomas downed 163 ounces of meatballs in 12 minutes—a world record.

### PASTA LA VISTA

The tradition of serving meatballs with spaghetti began not in Italy but in America, where we like being fat.

### FEATBALL

The world's largest meatball was born in '09 at Nonni's Italian Eatery in Concord, NH, weighing 222½ pounds and looking like a massive turd.

"But if you're going out to dinner, you have two choices: a special meal or McDonald's. Now, in its day McDonald's was cool. In 1963 a guy could take a girl there, roller-skate over, and she'd be stoked. But for our generation, there isn't that place. We wanted to open a place where you can take a date that won't be terribly expensive and still fits all the requirements of a good restaurant today."

The Meatball Shop was actually a bit of an accident. Holzman, 31, and Chernow, 30, grade-school buddies who started working together doing deliveries at a Manhattan vegan restaurant (irony alert!) 17 years ago, were finally following through on talk of a joint venture. They had scoped out a downtown location with two entrances, one next door to a bar. "There were always people outside, smoking cigarettes and hanging out," Chernow says, "and we thought, How are we gonna feed those drunk people?"

The duo decided to run a takeout window in that entrance and started casing the neighborhood to see what people were chowing down on late-night: pizza, fries, "basically garbage," according to Chernow. Then he recalled his time managing the bar at Frank, an Italian bistro in the city's East Village. "I didn't want to eat a big bowl of pasta late at night, so I would just order the meatballs with broccoli or spinach." The deal on the two-entrance spot fell through, but a seed had been planted. When a different lease opened up blocks away, Chernow says, "We looked at each other and said, 'Meatballs. Let's just fuckin' do it.'"

What they quickly discovered, selling nearly 2,000 balls a day right out of the gate, is that love of balls is pretty much universal. "Focused food is definitely where things are going right now," Chernow says. "The best burger," "the best pizza." But fundamentally, people just love meatballs. I think that's the beginning and end of it."

"People go crazy for them," Holzman adds. "There are all these fancy chefs putting out great meatballs. But at its base it's a comfort food. It's hard to screw up. On the scale of what bad is, you're not like, 'This is disgusting.' Maybe you're like, 'This isn't my favorite meatball.' But for the most part, meatballs taste good wherever you go."

There are, of course, personal preferences when it comes to

balls. In the flavor department, an early experiment with a salmon ball was removed from the menu, but not without pleas from its few passionate supporters. And it's possible that not every customer will love the Shop's philosophy on texture. "If your grandmother cooked dense meatballs, you're probably prone to enjoying a dense meatball," Chernow says. "Here we embrace a more supple ball."

"I want to put up a sign," Holzman chimes in. "BEGENTLE: OUR BALLS ARE TENDER."

Perhaps good advice for the most surprising segment of the restaurant's clientele: women. "I never expected to see groups of six girls waiting an hour to chow down on melted-cheese-covered balls," Holzman says.

"And then following it up with a massive ice cream sandwich," Chernow adds. "My theory is, a woman hears about us and calls five of her friends like, 'We gotta go to this place!' A dude just thinks, Maybe I'll get drunk and go there one night. I very rarely see a crew of guys come in here at eight for dinner. They come between midnight and 4 A.M. and barely speak—just, 'Mumble, mumble, meatball, mumble.'"

The pair's next step in feeding the hungry masses? Another foray into seafood. After an animated debate on the merits of a particular recipe for monkfish balls, Holzman pauses and shrugs. "Life is all about the next meatball," he says.



Meatball Shop chef Daniel Holzman, left, and GM Michael Chernow love talking about their balls.

## WHERE'S THE BEEF?

RESTAURANTS ALL OVER THE COUNTRY ARE SERVING UP TASTY WRECKING BALLS.

### 1 A16 SAN FRANCISCO, CA

This restaurant's Meatball Mondays feature orbs made from beef and pork trimmings, plus buttery prosciutto.

### 2 COPPA BOSTON, MA

Chef Ken Oringer's "meatballs alforno" are topped with a layer of lardo—that's straight-up pork fat to you.

### 3 RDG + BAR ANNIE HOUSTON, TX

Lober meatballs with remoulade sauce (a savory mayo-mustard combo) are fancy enough to feed to your lady.

### 4 CITY GROCERY OXFORD, MI

Extra hungry? Swallow an entrée portion of wild boar meatballs for \$30.

### 5 PROOF ON MAIN LOUISVILLE, KY

Bison and beef join forces in bison pas-trami sliders served with smoked aioli.

### 6 FRASCA FOOD AND WINE BOULDER, CO

Diners often call ahead to confirm that Frasca's famous stew of roasted veal and lamb meatballs will be on the menu.

### 7 DOMINICK'S LOS ANGELES, CA

This former Rat Pack hangout serves a combo pork-beef-mushroom ball. Feeling fishy? Try the tuna ball instead.



THEY'RE TENDER AND DELICIOUS!

## MAXIM'S BIG BALLS!

MEATBALL SHOP CHEF DANIEL HOLZMAN CREATED A BALL RECIPE JUST FOR US. GET ROLLIN'.

### GREAT BALLS OF FIRE

Yield: about 48 meatballs (8-10 servings)

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4 lbs. 80 percent lean beef, ground</li> <li>4 tsp. salt</li> <li>½ tsp. chili flakes</li> <li>1 tsp. fennel seeds, ground</li> <li>1 cup bread crumbs</li> <li>½ cup parsley, chopped</li> <li>2 Tbs. oregano, chopped</li> <li>2 cups fresh ricotta cheese</li> <li>4 eggs</li> <li>4 Tbs. olive oil</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Preheat the oven to 450° F.</li> <li>2. Combine all ingredients except the olive oil in a large bowl and mix thoroughly by hand.</li> <li>3. Drizzle the olive oil onto two large baking dishes (9" x 12"), evenly coating the surfaces.</li> <li>4. Roll the mixture into firm, golf-ball-size meatballs.</li> <li>5. Place the balls in the dish such that they're lined up evenly in rows and are touching each of their four neighbors in a grid.</li> <li>6. Roast until firm and cooked through, about 20 minutes.</li> </ul> |
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### MAY THE SAUCE BE WITH YOU

Yield: 16 cups (8-10 servings)

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2 large yellow onions, small dice (about 4 cups)</li> <li>2 lbs. pork shoulder, ground</li> <li>4 Tbs. olive oil</li> <li>4 tsp. chili flakes</li> <li>4 tsp. salt</li> <li>4 Tbs. tomato paste</li> <li>4 28 oz. canned tomatoes, chopped (preferably San Marzano)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Cook onions and pork with the olive oil, chili, and salt over medium heat in a large pot (six quarts), stirring constantly till meat is thoroughly cooked and onions are soft and beginning to brown, about 15 minutes.</li> <li>2. Add the tomato paste and continue cooking for five minutes.</li> <li>3. Add the canned tomatoes and stir constantly until the sauce begins to boil.</li> <li>4. Continue cooking for 35 minutes, stirring every four or five so the sauce doesn't burn.</li> </ul> |
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