

not for girls.

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(the chow)

# BALLS OUT



ANY SERIOUS neighborhood joint has three things: delicious cooking, late hours, and owners who you wish were your best friends. The Meatball Shop, on New York City's Lower East Side, is a serious neighborhood joint, serving up delicious meatballs, sauces, and sides until 4 a.m. For a restaurant that's been around less than a year, it's developed quite a cult following—almost half the patrons greet the owners and staff as if they've known each other for years—and people regularly wait more than an hour to get a seat.

Co-owners Daniel Holzman and Michael Chernow have been best friends since they were 13. They've each worked at fancy establishments on both coasts, but their joint effort is a significantly simpler affair. "The meatball," says Holzman, "is the perfect food to showcase great quality cooking. But it's super cost-effective so you can serve it inexpensively. I'm all value-driven."

Unsurprisingly, ball jokes abound at the restaurant. "It is, was, and continues to be funny," says Holzman. "There is something fundamentally funny about balls that people just get from birth. Little kids, old ladies, it is the double entendre. Balls. Everybody smiles. And you know what? People like to smile." The eternal joke isn't the only thing to smile about. The food is fantastic. The meatballs are juicy, while the sauces and sides are well thought out and perfectly crafted. It's a playfully interactive menu—customers check off which of the five balls, four sauces, and copious sides they want and hand their selections over to their waiter.

The desserts, cookies, and ice cream sandwiches masterminded by Chernow's wife are just as delicious (the mint ice cream is made with real mint) and customizable. "I just like regular shit," says Holzman. "It's very rare that I go to a fancy restaurant and get a dessert that tastes better than a good piece of pie or ice cream. I get it, you want to be fancy, but let's make it taste good first and foremost." Words to live by. EMILY TEMPLE [themeatballshop.com](http://themeatballshop.com)



DANIEL HOLZMAN AND MICHAEL CHERNOW OF THE MEATBALL SHOP HAVE THEIR BALLS TO THE WALL

## EAT UP

Mike Chernow breaks down The Meatball Shop's menu highlights

### POLENTA + SPICY PORK BALL

"Take a scoop of polenta first, then cut into the pork. Don't let any of the polenta fall off the fork! Now that is what we like to call a match made in heaven."

### MASHED POTATOES + CHICKEN BALL

"This is probably the fan runner-up to the polenta/pork combo. The chicken ball with parmesan cream sauce and mashed potatoes. It looks so damn good."

### STEAK, BACON, AND CHEDDAR BALL

"Now what I would do is move straight into this ball solo. Let the flavors ride on this one."

### SPICY MEAT SAUCE + VEGGIE BALL

"There's not a day that goes by that I don't eat this ball. The nuts, the texture, and the lentils, I love it."



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