

## on a roll

The duo behind the lower East Side's most popular meatballs open shop in Williamsburg

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In February of 2010, childhood best friends Daniel Holzman and Mike Chernow opened the Meatball Shop at Stanton and Allen, a small, cozy eatery serving — you guessed it — meatballs.

And although they hoped the comfort food would catch on, Holzman, a veteran chef and Culinary Institute of America grad, and Chernow, the front-of-house face at Second Ave. staple Frank's, couldn't imagine the place would become the neighborhood hotspot it is today.

"The other night we sat on Stanton St. at around 3 a.m. and just watched all the people standing outside waiting to order," says Chernow. "We're incredibly humbled by it. And we're incredibly proud."

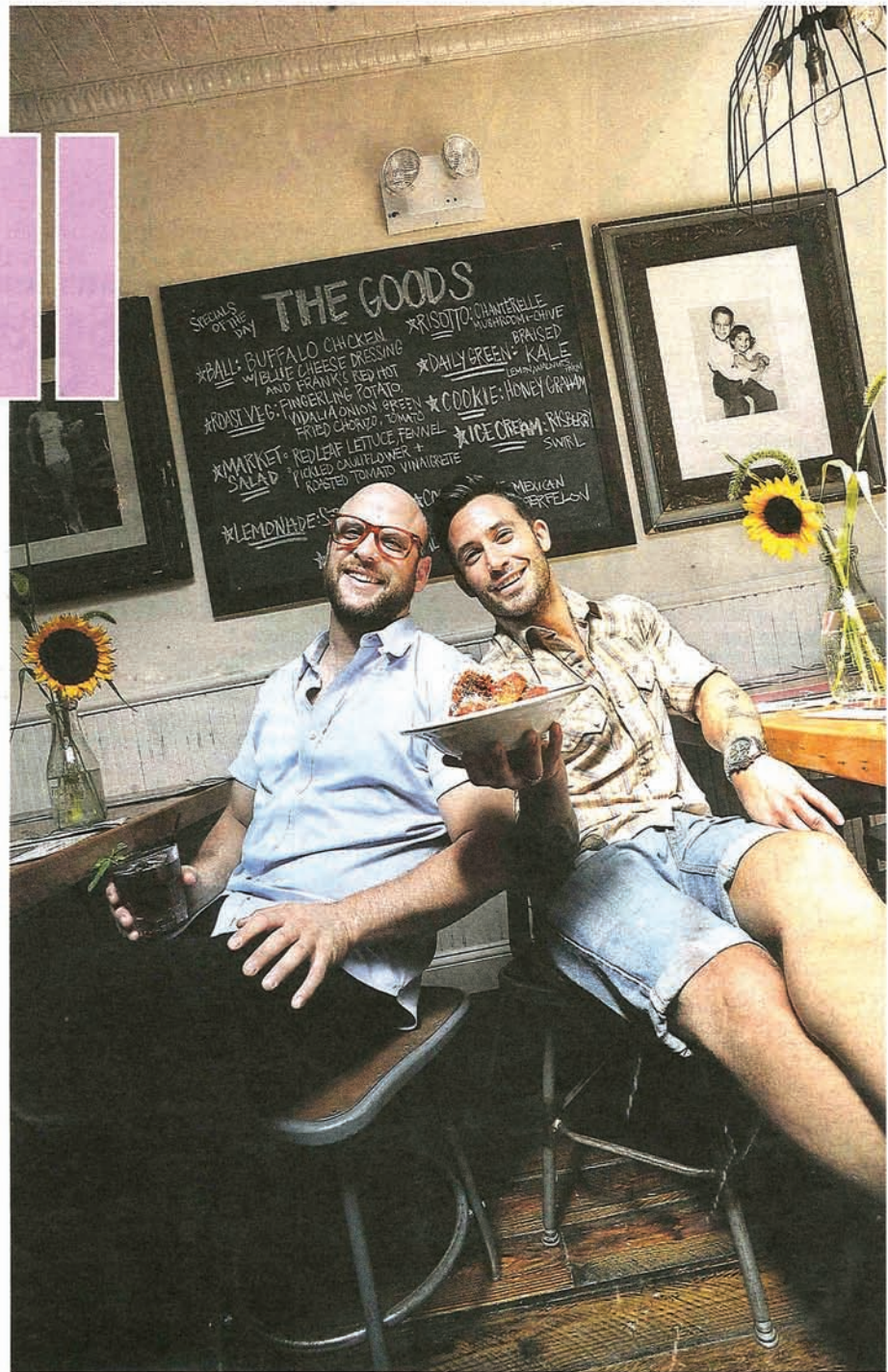
When an opportunity came along to open a second location in Williamsburg, where both live, they jumped.

"We wanted to be a part of this thriving food scene in Brooklyn; there are a lot of young hungry people over here," says Chernow.

The Williamsburg shop, which opened its doors at 170 Bedford Ave. this past Monday night, is about twice the size as the lower East Side location and will keep the same hours, staying open until 2 a.m. most of the week, and 4 a.m. from Thursday through Saturday. The feel of the restaurant is the same, but while the flagship location is beer-and-wine-only, the new one serves cocktails, like the Whiskey Pineapple (see recipe).

The popularity is a testament to the restaurant's core principle: Do one thing and do it the best. The meatballs (chicken, pork, veggie, beef) can be paired with any of their sauces (spicy meat sauce, Parmesan cream, pesto, classic tomato), in any fashion (naked balls, sliders, heroes, smashes).

Match that with Holzman's passion for farm-fresh, local vegetables (currently,



he's obsessed with roasted green tomatoes), and Chernow's knack for creating a homey environment (some of the black and white photos on the walls are of he and Holzman's grandparents, the rest are antiques he found upstate) and it's hard to imagine that there is ever a free table.

"It's an incredible feeling to make something that was at one point a dream a reality," says Holzman, who notes that they went from being a two-man show to having a staff of 150. "The response from

customers, at times, can be overwhelming. We're lucky dudes."

And although they admit they're a bit exhausted, the guys aren't quite done with their expansion quite yet. This fall, they'll open their third location on Greenwich Ave. in the West Village.

"It's a constant grind," says Chernow, smiling at the pun. "And we're not stopping anytime soon."

Daniel Holzman and Michael Chernow with a bowl of their gourmet meatballs at the new shop in Williamsburg.

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## Pork Meatballs in Spicy Meat Sauce

Yields: 24 balls, 8 cups sauce

### FOR MEATBALLS:

2 pounds pork shoulder, ground  
 1½ tablespoons salt  
 4 hot cherry peppers, minced  
 (about ½ cup)  
 ¼ cup pepper pickling liquid  
 4 slices white bread, minced  
 (about 3½ cups)  
 3 eggs  
 2 tablespoons olive oil

### FOR SAUCE:

1 large yellow onion, small dice  
 (about 2 cups)  
 1 pound pork shoulder, ground  
 2 tablespoons olive oil  
 2 teaspoons chili flakes  
 2 teaspoons salt  
 2 tablespoons tomato paste  
 2 28-ounce cans tomatoes,  
 chopped

1. Preheat the oven to 450.
2. Combine all of the meatball ingredients except for the olive oil in a large mixing bowl and mix by hand until thoroughly incorporated.
3. Drizzle the olive oil into a large baking dish (9 x 13), making sure to evenly coat the entire surface. (Use your hand to help spread the oil.)
4. Roll the mixture into round, golf ball-size meatballs, making sure to pack the meat firmly.
5. Place the balls into the oiled baking dish so that all of the meatballs are lined up evenly in rows and are touching each of their neighbors in a grid.
6. Roast until firm and cooked through (about 14 minutes).
7. Allow the meatballs to cool for five minutes before removing from the tray.

### FOR SAUCE:

1. Cook the onions and pork with the olive oil, chili and salt over medium heat in a large pot (6 quarts), stirring constantly until the meat is thoroughly cooked and the onions are soft and beginning to brown (about 15 minutes).
2. Add the tomato paste and continue cooking for five minutes.
3. Add the canned tomatoes and stir constantly until sauce begins to boil.
4. Continue cooking for 35 minutes, stirring every four or five minutes so that the sauce does not burn.



## Whiskey Pineapple with Ginger Spice

1 ounce pineapple juice  
 ¾ ounce ginger clove syrup  
 ¾ ounce lime juice  
 2 ounces Jack Daniels

Mix and serve in a Collins glass garnished with a lime wedge and candied ginger skewer.