



Meatballs have always been on a roll

BY LESLEY CHESTERMAN, POSTMEDIA NEWS JANUARY 11, 2012

Two best friends who have latched onto the potential of the lowly "boulette" are Daniel Holzman and Michael Chernow, who opened a restaurant built around the meatball theme called, you guessed it, the Meatball Shop.

Originating in Lower Manhattan, the restaurant now counts three locations where the emphasis is on casual food with mix and match options for the meatballs, sauces and sides.

Their book, *The Meatball Shop Cookbook* (Ballantine, 150 pages, \$33) features the restaurant's most popular and inventive meatball recipes and sauces. There are sides like risottos, potatoes, beans and vegetables and two chapters devoted to a dazzling array of salads and desserts based on the cookies and ice cream theme.

"Food should be enjoyed and not taken too seriously," is one of *The Meatball Shop Cookbook's* most telling lines. This is not any kind of fancy restaurant tome, but a snazzy little book filled with ideas to help liven up your weekday dinner table. Best of all, the recipes are simple and most include ingredients you probably already have on hand. And the pictures are appealing and inspiring.

Here is one of the more traditional meatball recipes.

The Meatball Shop's Swedish Meatballs

This classic is best served with mushroom gravy, mashed potatoes and - for that added Swedish touch - a dab of IKEA lingonberry jam.

2 tbsp (25 mL) olive oil

3 slices fresh white bread, roughly torn

1/2 cup (125 mL) beef broth

1/2 cup (125 mL) heavy cream

2 tbsp (25 mL) unsalted butter

1 onion, finely diced

2 tbsp (25 mL) chopped

fresh parsley

1/4 tsp (1 mL) ground allspice

1/4 tsp (1 mL) dry mustard powder

2 tbsp (25 mL) all-purpose flour

1 lb (500 g) 80 per cent lean ground beef

1 lb (500 g) ground pork shoulder

2 tsp (10 mL) salt

1/2 tsp (2 mL) freshly ground black pepper

2 large eggs

Preheat oven to 450°F (220°C). Drizzle olive oil into a 9-x 13-inch (22-x 33-cm) baking dish and use your hand to evenly coat the entire surface. Set aside.

Place the torn bread, beef broth and cream in a bowl and let soak for five minutes.

Melt the butter in a frying pan over medium-high heat. Add the onion and cook, stirring frequently, until transparent, six to eight minutes. Add the parsley, allspice, mustard powder and flour, and stir to incorporate. Pour the contents of the pan into the bowl with the bread mixture and stir until well mixed. Set aside to cool.

Combine the cooled onion and bread mixture with the ground beef, ground pork, salt, pepper and eggs in a mixing bowl and mix by hand until thoroughly incorporated.

Roll the mixture into round, golf ball-size meatballs (about 1 1/2 inches/4 cm), making sure to pack the meat firmly. Place the meatballs in the prepared baking dish, being careful to line them up snugly and in even rows vertically and horizontally to form a grid. The meatballs should be touching one another.

Roast for 20 minutes, or until the meatballs are firm and cooked through. A meat thermometer inserted into the centre of a meatball should read 165°F (74°C).

Allow the meatballs to cool for five minutes in the baking dish before serving.

Makes about 2 dozen 1 1/2-inch meatballs.