



# EPICUREAN MUSICIAN

Mar 21 / Josh

## All He Could Get Was This One Meatball



Today's interview features Dan Holzman of the Meatball Shop. Along with his partner, Michael Chernow, Chef Holzman is turning the Meatball Shop into a New York institution. With four restaurants currently under their belt, Dan and Michael don't seem to be slowing down. Chef Holzman sat down with us to discuss all things music and food.

EM: Did you go to culinary school?

*Chef Dan Holzman: I did, I went to the Culinary Institute up in Hyde Park. I only went for the first half of the program. I'm not a graduate. I got a good externship, and there were reasons they didn't want*

*me to come back, and I didn't want to go back. It was like a break up with a girlfriend, except you end up paying a lot.*

EM: Where did you externship?

*DH: At a restaurant that's not here anymore, called Palladin. It was opening a restaurant. The chef was a French guy, like old school French guy. It was in the Time Hotel, which I don't think is here anymore.*

EM: Who are your major culinary influences?

*DH: I worked for a bunch of different French guys. I think I have a lot of influence from everyone I worked for, down to the people who were terribly shitty. Not necessarily shitty, but slinging burgers. I learned from everybody.*

EM: What would the theme song be for your kitchen?

*DH: Rocky. It would be the Rocky soundtrack for sure, 100%. [We'd be running up the stairs](#). Either that or the Pirates of the Caribbean soundtrack. I feel like the kitchen is so much like a pirate ship. Maybe Master & Commander. I'm going to go with the Rocky soundtrack. Either that or Jaws.*

EM: What are some musical foods?

*DH: I guess ferns look like a bass clef.*

EM: What do you play in your kitchen?

*DH: Well, we have an open kitchen, so we have music in the restaurant all of the time. When we first started up, the first sous chef we ever hired was this guy named Scott Jaffe. He was a fucking metal head. I would play like the Afro-Cuban All-Stars in the morning, or I'd play...something weird, like some weird Pandora station. He would always have headphones on, and he'd always be smiling, going about his business. He was the most mild-mannered, nicest guy. Then you'd be like "Scott, [SCOOOOOOOOTT!](#)" Then he'd hear you, and reach over to pull off his headphones, and as he'd pull it off, you'd hear "KILL, KILL, KILL!!" Then what happened when we opened a second restaurant, he became the chef of that restaurant. I'd walk in in the morning, he'd just be fucking blasting death metal. That's the one thing I couldn't handle. You can do anything you fucking want, but you're putting bad vibes into the food. It was like angry prep kitchen. The balls aren't going to be round.*

EM: What's your favorite prep music?

*DH: I'm telling you man, the Afro-Cuban All-Stars. That keeps the kitchen going because what happens is, we generally had an upstairs and a downstairs kitchen, so the dishwashers dictate the downstairs kitchen, the music. We have a pretty eclectic mix of dishwashers, so we'll get guys from Africa playing real deal African music, we've got a lot of Latin guys that are definitely playing some Los Angelista Charlie, some Mexican love ballads. Every now and then, you'll hear an oldies song come on in Spanish, and you're like, I recognize that. So, I think there's a Latin flare to prep music. Although, I will definitely throw a little [Stevie Wonder](#) on in the morning if I'm feeling melancholy, maybe if it's asparagus season or something.*

EM: How you connect music and food?

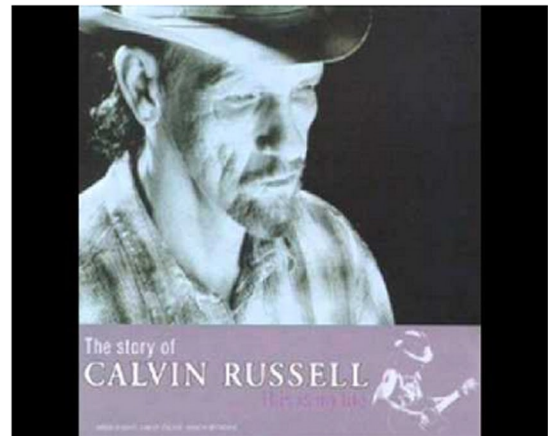
*DH: My partner, Michael, runs the front of the house. He went to culinary school, as well. We work on everything together, and he feels that music is one of the three most important pieces of the puzzle. It's the lighting, the food, and the music. The music is what sets the mood from the moment you walk into the restaurant. There's a great connection there...you want to get laid you got to be careful of what you through on...I have an old school radio in my house. It's heavy as shit. I tuned into the radio, and there's some DJ out there still doing it. It's better than Pandora.*

EM: Do you see a connection between cooking in an open kitchen and performing on stage?

*DH: I think everyone moves to the speed of the music, so absolutely.*

EM: What is your favorite band or song with food in the title?

*DH: One Meatball. It's real old school. Dave van Ronk. That was the first song we threw on the radio (after we opened).*



EM: What is your most rock star moment as a chef?

*DH: I've definitely fucking thrown down my apron and walked out, and said "fuck this, I'm out of here." I've never pissed on any teenagers or anything. I did eat a whole pizza in three bites. I'm not sure if that's rock star or just disgusting.*

EM: Do you know any other chefs who are killer musicians?

*DH: There's a lot of fucking chef rock bands. The guys from Blue Ribbon are in a crazy death metal band.*

EM: Favorite Concert moment?

*DH: Amadu & Miriam. I went to an Amadu & Miriam concert. They're fucking blind.. these guys have an amazing story. They met at a home for the blind in Africa. They said it was love at first sight. He plays guitar, and she sings. They were standing on stage...and they stopped singing. They dropped the curtain, but they hadn't finished. They started playing their next song. Everyone got up to leave, the lights went on. It took a couple of minutes before they figured out they were still playing.*

With four packed restaurants, Chef Dan and his partner Michael have turned all of New York in Meatballers. Make sure you swing by the new location in Chelsea to see what Chef Holzman will think up next. We can't wait for the duck meatballs to be introduced! Check their [website](#) for all updates.

Thanks to Larry for conducting yet another interview! The photo in this article are from the Meatball Shop's Facebook page.