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NYC eateries like Meatball Shop and Mermaid Inn have several locations. But how do they stack up against each other?

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Not all restaurants are created equal. As business booms, many successful eateries open second and third locations in different parts of town. Sure, what you can count on is consistently good food. But what you should know is that they aren't all exact replicas of each other, and sometimes everything from the cocktail list to the overall vibe will be significantly different.

Here's a guide to seven of our favorites—including Meatball Shop, Fatty 'Cue, Mermaid Inn and La Esquina—so nobody ends up in the wrong borough or neighborhood with a misdirected hankering for clam chowder and a po'boy.

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The Meatball Shop: Straight-ballin'

When The Meatball Shop opened on the Lower East Side in 2010, it could easily have suffered the same fate as other single-menu-item/flash-in-the-pan joints (see: Tpoutine). But the love of good balls is great: Not only did they open a location in Williamsburg (and, most recently, in the West Village), they've also inspired meat memes and ball pirates citywide.

Meats: The menus at LES and Williamsburg locations are the same: classic beef, spicy pork, chicken, veggie and daily special balls, topped with variety of sauces and served either "naked," in a slider, on a hero, "smashed" on brioche, or over a salad. When it comes to balls, consistency is key.

Seats: The original LES spot has 39 seats and one large communal table, which is good for sharing balls but maybe less good for privacy. In Williamsburg, the space is larger and more diverse, with an open kitchen offering counter and bar seating, plus two smaller communal tables, for a total of 70 seats.

Alcohol: The biggest difference between the two locations is the booze. Both serve beer and wine, but only in Williamsburg can you find a mix-and-match cocktail menu with the same DIY spirit as the food menu. There, diners check boxes on a spreadsheet to match one of five mixers (pink grapefruit and cherry, blackberry and mint, so on) with one of five liquors (tequila, vodka, gin, rum, whiskey).

[The Meatball Shop](#) (84 Stanton St., 212-982-8895)

[The Meatball Shop](#) (170 Bedford Ave., 718-551-0520)