

MAKE THE ULTIMATE SPICY MEATBALLS

Posted by [Adina Steinman](#) on Tuesday, November 29, 2011 - [Leave a Comment](#)

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For years, the meatball has been marginalized—cast aside by more fashionable iterations of Italian cuisine. Who cares, the thinking went, about humble Italian-American orbs of seasoned ground meat, set atop banal spaghetti, when the wide world of regional Italian cooking beckoned? A plate of spaghetti and meatballs came to be perceived as saccharine and Disneyfied—no wonder it was the chosen meal of Lady and her Tramp.



But somewhere in the rush to savor handmade peppardelle and slow-roasted porchetta, we've neglected an important and unassailable fact: **Meatballs are damn delicious.** What's more, they're culinary chameleons, endlessly adaptable to a wide range of seasonings and proteins. Daniel Holzman and Michael Chernow, owners of **The Meatball Shop** in Manhattan and Brooklyn, make judicious use of this chameleon-like faculty. At their restaurants, you can score a plate of classic meatballs if that's your pleasure—but as often as not, you'll be compelled to try more unusual options, like my favorite, the double-hot duo of spicy pork meatballs with spicy meat sauce (see below for the recipe). **Their new book** is filled with smart tricks, too:

- 1) Save time by forming your meatballs with an ice-cream scoop
- 2) Give meatballs an instant dose of heat and depth with pickled peperoncini
- 3) For the freshest flavor, grind the meat yourself in a food processor—it's easier than it sounds.

Check out how they make it, then cook up a batch yourself. Cliché never tasted so good.



Spicy Pork Meatballs with Spicy Meat Sauce

For the meatballs:

- 2 Tbsp olive oil
- 2 lbs pork shoulder, ground
- 1 Tbsp plus 1 tsp salt
- 4 jarred hot cherry peppers, minced
- ¼ cup hot cherry pepper pickling liquid
- 4 slices fresh white bread, minced
- 3 large eggs

For the sauce:

- 2 Tbsp olive oil
 - 1 large onion, finely diced
 - 1 lb ground pork, preferably shoulder
 - 2 tsp crushed red pepper flakes
 - 2 tsp salt, or to taste
 - 2 Tbsp tomato paste
- Two 26-ounce boxes Pomi chopped tomatoes or two 28-ounce cans whole plum tomatoes, roughly chopped with their liquid
tomato paste

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How to make it:

1. First, make the sauce: Heat the olive oil in a large pot over medium heat. Add the onions, ground pork, red pepper flakes, and salt and cook, 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 5 minutes. Add the tomatoes and stir constantly until the sauce begins to boil. Continue cooking for 35 minutes, stirring every 5 minutes or so to prevent the sauce on the bottom of the pot from burning. Taste and season with additional salt, if desired.
3. While the sauce is simmering, preheat the oven to 450°F. Drizzle the olive oil into a 9x13-inch baking dish and use your hand to evenly coat the entire surface. Set aside.
4. Combine the ground pork, salt, cherry peppers, pickling liquid, bread, and eggs in a large mixing bowl and mix by hand until thoroughly incorporated.
5. Roll the mixture into round, golf ball-size meatballs (about 1½ inches), making sure to pack the meat firmly. Place the balls 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.
6. Roast for 20 minutes, or until the meatballs are firm and cooked through. A meat thermometer inserted into the center of a meatball should read 165°F. Allow the meatballs to cool for 5 minutes in the baking dish before serving with the sauce and grated Parmesan. Makes about 2 dozen 1½-inch meatballs.