



What The Pros Know About Making the Perfect Meatball

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Meatballs never went out of style (just ask any Italian grandmother), but they seem to be having a moment. Cooking instructor Rick Rodgers, who has dozens of cookbooks to his name, chose the ground meat classics as the subject for his latest, *I Love Meatballs!*, out this week. And the guys behind [The Meatball Shop](#), which has two line-out-the-door locations in New York, now [have written a cookbook, too](#).

Like every Italian grandma, the books each have their own ways of doing things. Here's some of their most valuable advice:

Meat

When it comes to beef, sirloin (93% lean), ground round (85% lean), ground chuck (80% lean) are most popular. Rodgers likes ground round because it stands up well to long simmering. The Meatball Shop's Daniel Holzman and Michael Chernow use chuck. If you're using ground chicken or turkey, make sure it's a mix of dark and white meats, with skin. Breast meat is so lean, if you use it alone, your meatballs will be overly dry.

Breadcrumbs

They lighten the density of the meat and serve as a binder to help hold it together. If you're using store-bought plain bread crumbs, your meatballs will be firm. (Holzman and Chernow advise against using panko, since its texture is too rough.) Homemade bread crumbs make softer, more tender meatballs, and minced white bread makes for an even lighter ball.

Cooking Method

Sautéing or frying gives meatballs a golden crust. If they have cheese, though, Rodgers says to watch them carefully to avoid burning. Roasting or baking them is fast, less messy and the most consistent way to cook a high volume (that's why the Meatball Shop favors this method). Braising them in sauce, though, yields the most meltingly tender result. To help the balls keep their shape and to maintain the temperature of the simmering sauce, add the balls a few at a time, Rodgers says.

Leftovers

A next-day sandwich might be the best way to enjoy meatballs, and Holzman and Chernow advise readers to use a good, crusty Italian bread. Sliced bread is okay too, as long as you follow this important step: Add a thin layer of butter or mayonnaise to help slow down the inevitable migration of moisture from the meat to the bread.