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IN THE KITCHEN

Tasteful reading

The year's crop of cookbooks tends to focus on specialties and special places.



Mediterranean Lamb Balls, left, are from "The Meatball Shop Cookbook" by Daniel Holzman and Michael Chernow, which offers a variety of meatballs in a variety of ways. At right, the Porchetta Alla Joe Beef, a blend of pork belly and pork shoulder.



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The Meatball Shop Cookbook, by Daniel Holzman and Michael Chernow (*Ballantine Books*, \$28) You can thank these two for our country's current meatball obsession. They opened their tiny East Village restaurant, the Meatball Shop, in early 2010, and in nanoseconds it became a hit. (They've since opened two more.) The concept is simple: serve a variety of meatballs, in a variety of ways, and ensure each one is delicious. This book is fun, surprisingly diverse, wholesome, and easy. The chapters are categories that let home cooks create a complete menu. There are, of course, the meatballs, which range from traditional, like spicy pork, to unique, like lamb Mediterranean. The next chapters are filled with sauces, hearty sides and comforting veggies like roasted cauliflower with cherry peppers and breadcrumbs, plus salads and easy desserts. And while they suggest sauce and meatball pairings they also encourage experimentation. Don't think spaghetti here - the meatballs, which are baked, not fried, are served in a bowl with sauce, on a sandwich, or even in a salad. A great gift for those who like to create meals that are the life of the party.

-A.P.