



# Mama's little dumpling

Three of NYC's hottest chefs\* reveal the secret ingredient in their cooking — Mommy

By CARLA SPARTOS and CALLA SALINGER

**F**ORGET Le Cordon Bleu or the works of James Beard. Talk to many chefs and it's "Mom" they will inevitably name-check as a primary influence. From calling her for last-minute culinary advice to "borrowing" the recipes of her most beloved dishes, chefs — perhaps more than any other professionals — rely on their mothers.

For Mother's Day this Sunday, we spoke to some of the city's hardest working culinary whizzes and the women behind them about how they've influenced each other's cooking, the recipes they've stolen from each other over the years and what Mom really thinks of junior's roast chicken.

## Meatball Shop's Mom makes fine art

**Y**ou can see the influence of Daniel Holzman's mother in his restaurant The Meatball Shop, where he's the chef and co-owner, whether it's in her handmade mosaic of the logo in the entryway or her painting of a cow in the bathroom. But more important than adding her creative flair to his shop, she's a big reason he's cooking today.

When Holzman was a baby, mom Sherry, a secretary who dabbles in art, constructed a sandbox in her downtown loft kitchen and gave him cooking tools as toys. "He didn't play with things like other kids," she recalls. "He played with pots and pans and measuring cups and the cheese grater."

Often the working mom would prepare dinner with instructions for finishing it when Daniel got home. "Because of that I was cooking very early on," he says.

Sherry encouraged Daniel to become a delivery boy — his first restaurant job — at age 13. From there, Daniel's culinary ambitions took off — he worked with Eric Ripert at Le Bernardin and attended the Culinary Institute of America. After a successful career in California (where he was executive chef at SPQR), he moved back to New York to open his Lower East Side meatball mecca.

"A big part of moving back was to be closer to my mom," he says. "She stops by all the time [to] bring us stuff or sometimes just to bust our chops. She's one of our biggest fans and best critics."

**MY MAMA TELLS ME**



Daniel Holzman with fan — and ma — Sherry.

**“THE KITCHEN CAN BE A PLAYGROUND.”**

— Daniel Holzman

Christian Johnston