



Michael Chernow

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When he's not busy posing for men's fashion mags, Michael Chernow is probably eating something awesome. That, or he's continuing on his path of world domination, one meatball at a time.

If you're not already familiar, Michael is one half of the duo that brought [The Meatball Shop](#) into all of our lives, and he's one smart dude. The Meatball Shop just opened up their sixth location on the Upper West Side, and if you haven't figured it out by now, that sh*t is about to go full on Shake Shack, covering every inch of America with its balls.

A life-long New Yorker, Michael has almost certainly been eating out in this town longer than you have, so it's no surprise he couldn't keep it to five picks when he handed over his Friday Fives. Here you'll find classic New York recommendations, along with a few LA tips for good measure.

After you're done reading about Michael's go-to restaurants, follow him on [Instagram](#), and stay in the loop on all the latest via [The Meatballers on Twitter](#). Lord knows that if there isn't a Meatball Shop near you now, there will be soon.

Michael's "Perfect For" Picks

Perfect For: Classic NYC Establishment

Blue Ribbon Brasserie (97 Sullivan St.) – "I've only spent 33 1/2 years on this planet, all of which, except a few unsuccessful stints in LA, were spent in New York City. If I had to choose my all time favorite go-to NYC food establishment, it would have to be the Blue Ribbon Brasserie. The Brasserie is the quintessential NYC restaurant; truly iconic, classic to the industry, and set the bar for up-and-comers like myself. The quaint 30ish seater always does the job, for any occasion. The food is delicious and consistent, the service top notch, the crowd always stylish and the energy second to none. I've been indulging at Blue Ribbon for close to 20 years, I always leave saying "one day I will be able to do it as well as they do."

Perfect For: Damn Good Steaks

Minetta Tavern (113 Macdougall St.) – "The Bone-In New York Strip for two at Minetta Tavern could very well be the most delicious piece of meat I have ever sunk my teeth into. These guys are magicians in the kitchen. The whole menu is killer but when I have steak on my mind, I'm thinking Minetta."

Perfect For: Dining Solo

Frank (88 2nd Ave.) – "Now, I'm a little biased as I've spent some years behind the bar at this place, but when I'm hungry, my lady is out of town and my friends are too busy to hang, I head over to Frank Restaurant in the East Village. The food is always on point, the cast of characters is always fun and interesting, and you can get out of there for \$30, assuming you're not looking to get hammered. Get the Rigitoni Ragù – it's the dish that inspired The Meatball Shop."

Perfect For: Dinner With The Parents

Maialino (2 Lexington Ave.) – "Maialino is the perfect restaurant to wine and dine parents. The atmosphere borders fancy but the service and menu take you back down to earth. Danny Meyer and his team have mastered the casual "fine dining" experience. I have been taking my mom to Maialino for the last few years and I am always stoked to see what Chef Nick Anderer has up his sleeve. Plus, my mom thinks it's the best place on earth."

Perfect For: Special Occasions

Damon Baehrel (776 County Highway 45, Earlton, NY 12058) – "There is one place I always attempt to get into for EXTRA special occasions but it is the **hardest reservation to score** on the planet. Luckily, I have become good friends with the chef/owner DAMON BAEHREL, which is also the name of the restaurant, cutting down the now five-year wait to just a few months. The first time I tried to get a reservation here we were put on a two-plus year wait list. It took two years to get in, but it was well worth it. This place is tucked away up in Earlton, NY, about two hours out of NYC. Chef Baehrel cooks out of his home, and the 20 seat restaurant is in his basement. Yes, his basement. He has developed a style of cooking which he calls Native Harvest Cuisine. He cooks only with ingredients forged and cultivated on his 12-acre property. The dude is special. So if you are planning a graduation or anniversary, call a few years beforehand...not kidding."

Bonus Picks

Favorite Taco In LA

La Isla Bonita (4th St. & Rose Ave, Venice, CA 90293) – "A taco truck that sits on the corner of Rose Ave and 4th street in Venice Beach, LA. This isn't your average taco truck – this diamond-in-the-rough on-wheels is where I look forward to hitting as soon as I touch down in LA. Every bite that comes off that truck kicks ass, but the Ceviche Tostadas are what you are looking for. They are off-the-chain, fresh, tasty and \$5 for two. As are the polpo tacos. Take my advice and get there as soon as you can."

Favorite Restaurant Ever

Cal Pep (Plaça de les Olles, 8, 08003 Barcelona, Spain) – "Spain is known for many things; its rich history and culture, incredible artists, VERY pretty ladies, but most importantly FOOD! Cal Pep in Barcelona's Gothic quarter is actually my favorite restaurant on the map. The food, drink, atmosphere and staff know how it should be done and have been doing it for years. There is no menu here. Your server asks about allergies and preferences and the food simply starts flowing, kinda like an Omakase of tapas. The baby squid and garbanzo beans are a stand out."

Favorite Coffee Shop

Abraço Espresso (86 E. 7th St.) – "Abraco is a tiny sliver of a space on East 7th street between 1st & 2nd Ave and it has the best espresso I have ever had, especially if Jamie, the owner, is there to pull it for you. The espresso is sweet and perfectly balanced. Their cortado is also worth the wait and their pour over coffee is equally as good. If I lived in the East Village, I would be there every morning... JAMIE, IF YOU ARE READING THIS, OPEN IN WILLIAMSBURG... PLEASE."

Michael's Twitter People

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