


## The Meatball Shop

The Meatball Shop  NYT Critics' Pick | Italian, New American | \$ | 84 Stanton Street, Lower East Side | (212) 982-8895

By BETSY ANDREWS MARCH 16, 2010



At the Meatball Shop on the Lower East Side, a childhood favorite is attracting crowds.  
Casey Kelbaugh for The New York Times

*84 Stanton Street (Allen Street), Lower East Side, (212) 982-8895,  
[themeatballshop.com](http://themeatballshop.com).*

With a 40-minute wait on a Sunday night, the feeding at The Meatball Shop, a neo-retro Lower East Sider dressed in vintage photos and meat-grinder parts, is so frenzied it feels Pavlovian. Say “meatball” in this town, and everyone’s inner child comes out noshing.

Too bad these house-ground balls (four for \$7), served with your choice of four sauces, aren’t roundly delicious.

The beef isn't meaty enough; the inconsistent chicken was moist one day, dry the next; the salmon was too fishy.

But the lamb, a special one night, was tasty, ground kofta-style with mint, walnuts and raisins. And the cherry-pepper-spiked pork is as zesty and porcine as it ought to be.

It's particularly zingy bathed in the spicy meat sauce. The mushroom gravy paired satisfyingly with the mushroomy vegetable balls, but the Parmesan cream sauce clashed with everything.

These pliable meatballs want firm contrast, so if you order them on a sandwich instead of over [pasta](#) (\$11) resist the soft brioche "smash" (\$8) and sliders (\$3) and go for the crusty baguette hero (\$9) instead.

Forgo the pasty white beans, oversteamed broccoli, and undercooked polenta (each \$4), and enjoy a brisk baby arugula and apple [salad](#) on the side (\$4).

It'll cleanse your palate nicely, but not nearly as nicely as the homemade mint [ice cream](#). Wedged between nutty brownie [cookies](#) in one of several build-your-own ice cream sandwiches for dessert (\$4), it soothes even the crankiest kid, young or old.

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