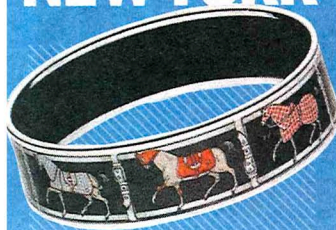


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Master of meatballs

A day in the life of chef Daniel Holzman

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Eat/
Drink

This chef's world revolves around ...

MEATBALLS



PHOTOS BY PAUL CRISPIN QUITORIANO

BY LUCY COHEN BLATTER • Special to amNewYork

Daniel Holzman is a popular guy. And it's not just because he's elevating comfort food at all three locations of the Meatball Shop (Lower East Side, the West Village and Williamsburg).

The personable chef and co-owner is the type of boss who hugs his employees goodbye and welcomes diners with a big smile.

But lest you think the busy entrepreneur spends his day making compliments and chatting up customers, he also finds time to do office work, cook on the line, manage the staff, put out small fires ... even wash the dishes. "I almost always find myself washing dishes at some point during the day," he says.

Here is a day in the life of the Maestro of Meatballs:

Locations:
Lower East Side
84 Stanton St.,
212-982-8895

West Village
64 Greenwich Ave.,
212-982-7815

Williamsburg
170 Bedford Ave.,
718-551-0520

1. Kicking the day off in BK

Holzman usually starts his day at the Williamsburg location, which houses the restaurant's office. He catches up on paperwork, sends emails and checks in on the restaurant.

2. Commuting by bike

Holzman rides his bike between locations. "It's definitely the fastest way to get around the city," he says. And because he's constantly moving between the three restaurants, speed is a necessity: "Ideally, I'd be at all three for all shifts."



staff members hello, then sat down to chat with some friends of his dad's. He also quickly scarfed down the Thanksgiving special — a turkey meatball and stuffing ball served over mashed potatoes with cranberry sauce on the side.

3. Chatting with everyone

Everyone wants a minute of Holzman's time, but he doesn't seem to mind. As soon as he walked into the new West Village location, he hugged some of the

4. Dealing with staff issues

Holzman changed his tone and became more serious when he had to call and reprimand an employee. "This is the worst part of my job," he says.



5. Facing technical difficulties

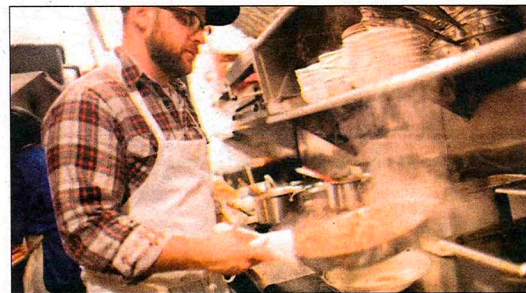
"Everything breaks the first month," says Holzman. This time, it was the meatball steaming machine, which keeps the balls warm after being cooked. Holzman got to the bottom of the problem by replacing a hose. His proactive attitude saved him from calling in a professional and spending about \$300, he says.

6. Keeping everything tidy

Holzman is a self-proclaimed neat freak, and throughout the course of the day he straightens up work areas, washes dishes ... even organizes the dishwashing station. Though these might seem like small details for the chef-owner to handle, Holzman always employs a DIY approach. "There's no problem that's not my problem," he says.

7. Jumping on the line

Holzman prepares several meatball dishes during the day. He also oversees what's happening on the line, making suggestions to his fellow chefs (such as adding more sauce), wiping off plates and checking food temperatures.



8. Horsing around

Holzman's restaurants — which he co-owns with longtime friend Michael Chernow — are "fuss-free," meaning they don't take themselves too seriously. (The restaurant's slogan is "We make balls," and the menu includes a section called Naked Balls — for meatballs sans sauce — and a dish called the Family Jewels: meatballs topped with a fried egg). All three locations are open until 4 a.m. on weekends, and impromptu dance parties have been known to happen there. Holzman also jokes around a lot with his staff; we witnessed him practicing martial-arts moves with the West Village location manager.



9. Getting more serious

Holzman's the type of guy who likes to have fun at work, but gets more serious when he talks about his passions: "I think the problem is that fast food never really evolved. I wanted to open a place that served tasty, filling and good-quality food that's a good value and is comforting." Nothing to laugh at there.

