

Three Dishes with Michael Chernow and Daniel Holzman of The Meatball Shop, New York City



This new column by Anjali Kumar invites you on a weekly adventure to great restaurants around the world to meet the amazing chefs, mixologists, restaurateurs and sommeliers behind them and the foods that inspired their work today. She sits down with Michael Chernow and Daniel Holzman of [The Meatball Shop](#) in New York City to find out which dishes shaped their cooking style and outlook today.

Daniel Holzman, Chef/Owner

Daniel started his cooking career at age 15 at La Bernardin in New York City. Working after school and on weekends and holidays, Daniel remained there for 4 years until, at the suggestion of Chef Eric Ripert, he attended the Culinary Institute of America with a full scholarship from the James Beard Foundation. Prior to graduation, Daniel accepted a position at the soon-to-open Paladin in New York City for Chef Jean Louis Paladin, working alongside such culinary notables as [Wylie Dufresne](#) and Sam Mason. Six months later Jean Louis asked Daniel if he would be willing to move to Las Vegas, NV, to fill a vacancy at his flagship restaurant Napa in the Rio Hotel. Accepting the offer, Daniel began what would ultimately become a 10-year culinary journey through some of Los Angeles, and San Francisco's finest restaurants including The Campton Place, The Fifth Floor, Aqua and Jardiniere.

In 2004 Daniel began his first management job as chef of the California organic bistro, Axe, in Venice, Los Angeles. After 1 year at Axe, Daniel was offered and accepted the position of executive chef at the Inn of the Seventh Ray, a 250-seat restaurant in the Topanga hills known for its romantic outdoor setting and lavish weddings. Daniel remained at the Inn until 2007 when he moved to San Francisco to open SPQR, a rustic Roman Osteria, as co-owner and executive chef. Within 3 months of opening SPQR received 3 1/2 out of 4 stars from Michael Bauer in *The San Francisco Chronicle*, a rating usually reserved for far fancier restaurants.

In 2008, Holzman and three partners founded KB treats LLC, an ice cream novelty company. KB's first product, QB's (crispy rice and marshmallow treats filled with ice cream), were an immediate success and can be found in markets nationwide, including Whole Foods, Giant and Stop and Shop.

What is the dish that:

1. Inspired your love of food?

Probably my mother's cheese blintzes with applesauce which are pretty delicious. She filled them with cottage cheese. I think that did it for me.

2. Is your signature?

Meatballs are our thing for sure. I was kind of nervous that I might get pigeonholed with the whole meatball thing, I guess that happened. I am good with it. I like meatballs.

3. You cook on your night off?

Seafood always, no matter what. Shellfish, I go crazy for it. I crave fish all the time. Fish. All the way.

Michael Chernow, Managing Partner/Owner

Michael Chernow began his professional restaurant career in 1996 behind the bar of the popular nightclub, Life, on Bleecker Street in New York City. Learning from the ground up, Michael quickly worked his way through the ranks becoming the youngest bartender on staff. After 2 years working at both Life in New York and its East Hampton sister club, The Tavern, Michael signed on to open Woo Lae Oak on Mercer St. in New York City. In 2001 Michael made the move to Los Angeles where he worked at Woo Lae Oak's original location on La Cienega Blvd. Returning to New York, he opened Punch and Judy, a wine bar on Clinton Street. In 2002 Frank Prizzano offered Michael a position behind the bar of his eponymous flagship restaurant Frank on Second Avenue.

For 7 years Michael managed the bar at Frank where he had a large, loyal following. In 2007 Michael enrolled in the French Culinary Institute, graduated with honors, and was awarded an Associate's degree in both culinary arts and restaurant management in 2008.

What is the dish that:

1. Inspired your love of food?

There are so many things, but off the top of my head, the signature dish of the last restaurant I worked at (Frank Restaurant) was a rigatoni ragu and it was a rigatoni pasta in the most delicious red sauce with meatballs and sausage. It is so tasty and people travel for it and it kind of inspired me to open up The Meatball Shop.

2. Is your signature?

The signature dish here in some people's eyes is the Meatball Hero with beef meatballs, tomato sauce and mozzarella cheese on white. I personally love the spicy pork meatballs with the spicy meat sauce over polenta.

3. You cook on your night off?

I love whole fish. So I will go and pick up a whole striped bass fish or a whole dorade and throw it on the grill with a little lemon and salt and arugula salad.

— Written by Anjali Kumar