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Welcome to *The Tastemakers*, a series in which we ask top culinary talents a few questions about the world of food and drink.

If you've ever had the pleasure of diving into a warm, saucy bowl of meatballs at one of [The Meatball Shops](#) in NYC, you'll understand why co-owner [Michael Chernow](#) has become a culinary force to be reckoned with.

After working for years in an Italian restaurant and falling in love with the comforting cuisine, Chernow opened the first Shop in 2010 with his partner, Daniel Holzman. Since then, he has helped to open five more locations, launched NYC seafood hot spot [Seamore's](#) and starred in FYI's new TV series [Food Porn](#). But when we asked which of his accomplishments in 2015 he was most excited about, Chernow was quick to answer: "the birth of my son."

We chatted with Chernow about his year in food, what's in his fridge and what's to come for him in 2016.

How did you get started in the industry, and what made you realize that you wanted to work in food?

"It started when I was about 13 years old, and I was delivering food on the Upper East Side. From the beginning, I was really passionate about people, and food was a way to get to them. Food and people just go together.

I opened up the first Meatball Shop on February 9, 2010. I had worked in an Italian restaurant in the East Village for about eight years, and in that restaurant, there was always this amazingly delicious dish called the rigatoni ragù—basically, just pasta with meatballs and sausage. I ate that rigatoni ragù, sans the rigatoni, every day for eight years. So if there's ever a question about my passion for meatballs, that's where it all started."