

THE MEATBALL STOPPE

Meatballs and so much more

You may think you know your meatballs. Maybe you've even gone beyond the holy trinity of beef, pork, and veal and experimented with poultry or veggies on a quest to create the perfect spherical spaghetti staple. But chef Isabella Morgia di Vicari, who owns and operates this homey spot with her husband, Jeff Morgia, really, really knows meatballs. In fact, thirteen distinctly different styles of meatballs are on her menu, made with ingredients ranging from traditional to twist-on-a-classic to downright daring.

Purists will love Nonna's traditional Italian—so did Guy Fieri when he featured the restaurant on *Diners, Drive-Ins and Dives*—as well as the versions inspired by chicken Parmigiana and chicken marsala. There are also mac-and-cheese balls and a vegetarian version that Fieri favored with the house's thick white-bean ragu. All the choices here—including meatballs made with lamb, crab, and even alligator—come with one of seven house-made sauces and are available as a flight, by the bucket, as a “smash” on a fresh ciabatta roll, or with a side of creamy polenta, pasta, or that soulful bean ragu.

Di Vicari is no one-trick pony. She also offers an array of comfort foods from Italy, the Mediterranean, and the United States, as well as vegan and gluten-free options. Her favorite dish is the eggplant stack, “three layers of perfectly breaded and seasoned eggplant slices stacked like a lasagna with three cheeses in between each layer, and topped with our roasted tomato sauce—no marinara sauce in

Spaghetti and meatballs originated in the United States during the first wave of Italian immigration between 1880 and 1920. Meat was more affordable in the United States and quickly become a staple on Italian-American tables.



Top left: “La Famiglia Room” at the Meatball Stoppe. Photo by Eight Fifths.

Top right: A meatball smash. Photo courtesy of the Meatball Stoppe.

Bottom: Chef Isabella Morgia di Vicari. Photo by Eight Fifths.

our house—all prepared to order,” she says. She’s also partial to the eggplant panino, which is baked with sautéed peppers, onions, and provolone on a ciabatta roll and then topped with arugula, thinly sliced red onions, and the signature pesto mayo.

Her real passion, however, is her customers, and Di Vicari strives to greet them with the warmth typically reserved for family. It is her store’s welcoming aroma and environment, Di Vicari maintains, that causes her customers to claim that “it reminds them of their nonna’s and mamma’s cucina.” According to Di Vicari, “This is something that is greatly missing in our world today. When we bring this genuine heartfelt gift to them, what more can we give?”

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