

| HOLIDAYS |

Rescued Pigs Find Forever Homes During Miami's Annual Pig Pardoning

NICOLE DANNA | DECEMBER 14, 2021 | 8:00AM



In 2018, Luna (pictured here) and Layla became the first guests of honor at Miami-Dade's now annual Pig Pardoning Ceremony. Photo courtesy of Deep Sleep Studios



For decades, the annual presidential pardoning of the turkey has become an American holiday tradition.

Many believe the **first president to free a fowl** dates back to Abraham Lincoln's 1863 unofficial pardoning of a turkey for which his son Tad had requested clemency. Decades later, Presidents John F. Kennedy and Ronald Reagan – as well as First Ladies Thelma Nixon and Rosalynn Carter – pardoned Thanksgiving turkeys.

The turkey pardon we know today did not become an annual tradition until George H.W. Bush spared a bird's life during his first year in office in 1989 following a **kindhearted speech**.

Brickell's Latin Café 2000 owners Eric and Katherine Castellanos wondered: "Why not do the same for other animals chosen for holiday fare?"



MIAMI-DADE MAYOR WILL PARDON PIGS AT ANNUAL CHRISTMAS PIG PARDON...

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After packaging hundreds of to-go orders for roast pork during the 2018 Thanksgiving holiday, the Castellanos brainstormed an idea for an event that would pardon Miami's most favorite Nochebuena meal – the pig.

"They were watching the 'Presidential Pardon' on TV and at the same time getting all these orders for lechón during Thanksgiving," Latin Café 2000 publicist Mabel De Beunza tells *New Times*. "We thought it would be a great idea to pardon some pigs instead, because it's pork – not turkey – that makes it to the table on the holidays in Miami. The owners approached the mayor with the idea, and the rest is history."

Later this month, hundreds of Florida swine will most likely meet their fate in a Miami Caja China on Christmas Eve. Roasted pig, or lechón, is the generally accepted centerpiece for many South Florida family holiday feasts.

But for a few lucky pigs, a different future awaits. Over the past few years, an annual ceremony has "pardoned" several local pigs from a trip to the slaughterhouse.

Continuing the tradition, this week Miami-Dade Mayor Daniella Levine Cava will host Miami's fourth-annual Pig Pardoning Ceremony. The event takes place today, December 14, at Latin Café 2000, where Cava will personally pardon three swine.

Piglets Manchita, David, Shlomo, and Sakura will all be issued an official pardon.

Attendees are invited to witness the event while enjoying complimentary spinach croquetas and Cuban cafecito.

After the ceremony, the piglets will be transported to a foster home in the Redlands where they will have ample space to enjoy their newfound freedom. They'll join the ranks of Layla, Luna, Chans, Peppa, and Petra – who were granted a similar reprieve in past years.

"This is a community event but also something that is authentically ours as Miamians," De Buenza says. "Yes, it's a Cuban tradition, but also one that applies to so many cultures that celebrate the holidays with the pig as a centerpiece of the meal."

Fourth Annual Miami Pig Pardoning Ceremony. *10:30 a.m. on Tuesday, December 14, at 1053 Brickell Plz., Miami. The event is free and open to the public.*