

Hops and Hog Feed Is Dining Theme for Seventh Annual Thankspigging

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While Skinny Legs is usually known for its famous burgers, on Thanksgiving Day look for offerings of roasted pig and grilled alligator.

Although the Coral Bay restaurant is closed on November 22, architect Ken Yolman will take over the space for the seventh year in a row for what has quickly become a community tradition — Thankspigging.

The event originally started after Thanksgiving gatherings at Lameshur Bay fizzled out, explained Yolman, who owns Coral Bay Design Build with his brother Rick Yolman.

"Everyone used to go out to Lameshur for a pot luck lunch on Thanksgiving," said Yolman. "When I first got here I couldn't afford to bring or make anything so I was one of the free-loaders who used to go out there for a free meal."

The neighbors who gathered at Lameshur eventually went their separate ways, but Yolman kept the torch going.

"When I could afford it, I opened my house and hosted a Thanksgiving dinner," said the architect. "That first year 80 people showed up. I bought a pig then instead of a turkey because it was cheaper and was what I could afford."

A Day for Everyone

Yolman knew how it felt to be away from family on a holiday and didn't want anyone to experience having nowhere to go on Thanksgiving.

"Thankspigging is for everyone," said Yolman. "It's for people with nowhere to go and now it's become where people go. You have the multi-millionaire guys sitting there with guys who just came out of the bush."

"It's Coral Bay," he continued. "People always help each other out. Everyone needs a good home-cooked meal on Thankspigging."

While the laid back atmosphere makes for a relaxing holiday, there are two rules Yolman sticks to.

"I never turn anyone away and I never take any money," said the architect.

For the first Thankspigging celebration, Yolman procured a 60-pound pig and whipped up 20 pounds of mashed potatoes. The second year, Yolman's house was overrun with about 125 people and it became clear a bigger venue was needed.

"It just got too big to have at my house anymore," Yolman said. "At first Dougie (Sica, co-founder of Skinny Legs) was worried he'd have to work that day, it was one of his only days closed. But I told

them I'd do it all and he and Moe (Skinny's owner Chabuz) said 'go ahead.'"

Since hosting Thankspigging at Skinny Legs for the past five years, Yolman has seen the number of revelers steadily increase. Last year more than 300 people enjoyed the lavish spread which now includes a lot more than just pork and potatoes.

Although it is not required to bring a dish, many people do and have been discussing their creations for weeks.

From Manicotti to Grilled Goat

As of press time the Thankspigging '07 menu included everything from manicotti to seared sushi ahi tuna. Grilled ribs, roasted garlic mashed potatoes, deep-fried turkey, grilled goat, cheese grits, jalapeno poppers, sweet potato casserole and fruit pies galore are only a sampling of the other confirmed offerings.

Of course Yolman — with help again this year from his brother Rick — is cooking up the "pigging" portion of the day, two 100-pound pigs as well as grilling 20 pounds of spice rubbed alligator.

Ten gallons of home-brewed draught beer will be on tap for the first time this year. Having the steam beer and pale ale inspired Yolman to crown this Thankspigging "A Hops and Hog Feed."

And the food is only part of the fun. Local musicians usually turn up with acoustic instruments in hand and everyone looks forward to seeing what Sally "Decorating Diva" Bolhaus will have up her sleeve. This year she's promised a Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade theme so don't be surprised to see over-sized balloon floats.

What started out as a way to ensure no one went hungry on Thanksgiving is now an extravagant affair that takes months of planning and hours of preparation — not to mention thousands of dollars of supplies. But none of that deters Yolman who is more excited than ever for the big event.

"I do it to give something back," he said. "It's become a Coral Bay tradition. My mom was here last year for the party and it made her finally realize why I love Coral Bay."

"Plus I look forward to eating," the architect continued. "The food is really good."

There is one thing Yolman never has to worry about — there have never been any leftovers.

Although Yolman will be manning the pig spit starting around 7 a.m. on Thursday, November 22, the feast will be served around 4 p.m. So stop by whenever, bring something or don't — but have a great "Hops and Hog Feed" this Thankspigging!