



celebrate

good times

Think your glasses together and toast to the holidays. Why December in Miami is not just like the one you used to know—it's better. BY ADRI WASSBERG

Between intricate landscaping on 34th Street and King County's decorating of a white Christmas, now we have discovered the weirdly warm, yet festive spirit of a holiday run during winter in the Yule "Tide Christmas" with the top drama, most delightful off the home as the famous 80-degree weather (well, to be totally accurate, Miami has a high of 78 on Christmas Day 2013), and knowing how the bright blue sparkle beyond the white sands of South Beach. Now that's an Oscar-worthy December. Sure, you won't be skating through the snow or walking in a winter wonderland, but in Miami you can throw on a pair of flip-flops, get a martini at the beachside pool, and be laughing all the way, with your bliniest-toddler, relatives, up north in his winter wonderland, and in the snow.

Miami has its own version of Hollywood glam and glitz, though. Whether it's the "The Simpsons" performing at the 20th floor of the hotel to 1000 or 1000th party on a rooftop at the famous Miami Beach hotel, the day after Christmas in 1972, the holiday has a long history of being celebrated. These days, you might bump into a vacationing Adam Sandler at

REINDEER GAMES



Dasher on over to the places to find your inner Dancer, Prancer, Vixen, or Cupid.

STEAMY SANTAS—Decked for the holidays, Steam nightclub will be packed with scantily clad Mrs. Clauses, naughty elves, bad Santas, and more than 20 different acts in a selection of shows and secret rooms perfect for holiday nightclub madness. Thursdays–Saturdays in December, 30 NE 14th St., Miami; steammiami.com

THE COLORS OF CHRISTMAS—Two-time Grammy winner Peabo Bryson is joined by Ruben Studdard, Taylor Dayne, and Jennifer Holliday for a collection of hits and holiday classics. December 11, Adrienne Arsht Center for the Performing Arts, Knight Concert Hall, 1300 Biscayne Blvd., Miami; arshcenter.org

ROCK HOLIDAY TRADITION—The Trans-Siberian Orchestra brings tradition to a new generation with revamps of classic holiday hits, as well as debuting a new one with *The Christmas Attic*. December 12, BB&T Center, 1 Panther Pkwy., Sunrise; ticketmaster.com

UPSCALE CAROLING—The annual *Christmas Carols sing-along at Soho Beach House* is a family-friendly party packed with mulled wine, hot cocoa, and Miami's elite. December 12, Cecconi's Garden and Drawing Room, 4385 Collins Ave., Miami Beach; cecconismiamibeach.com

SHAKER SWEATER PARTY—Toss on your ugly sweaters and party with Miami's hipsters and cool kids at this annual *soirée* hosted by Nick D'Annunzio and Jose Ortiz at *Broken Shaker at the Freehand*. Mid-December, 2727 Indian Creek Dr., Miami Beach; thefreehand.com

SIGHTS AND SOUNDS OF THE SEASON—The *New World Symphony* presents a festive program with a variety of holiday selections. December 19–20, New World Center, 500 17th St., Miami Beach; nsu.edu



FROM LEFT: Adrienne and Chris Bosh at the annual Christmas with Chris Bosh to benefit underprivileged kids at Game Time at Sunset Place in 2011; Belkys Nery at Village of Merrick Park's tree lighting ceremony last year.

the Boca Raton Resort & Club, Hayden Panettiere in Hollywood Beach, Michael J. Fox and his family dining at Prime 112, or Lenny Kravitz at Soho Beach House, as many stars now call Miami home for the holidays.

But nobody brings the holiday spirit like England-born actress and filmmaker Gabrielle Anwar and her fiancé, Shareef Malnik, owner of The Forge Restaurant. "It begins at 6 AM with all of us donning red matching onesies," says Malnik of Christmas morning with Anwar and her kids, Paisley, Hugo, and Willow. "After the log fire is built, we move on to raiding the stuffed stockings hanging on the fireplace. Then we have Gabrielle's famous Yule Tide breakfast, which consists of British-style omelets and pancakes, scones, and her homemade GG's Granola made with macadamia nut butter."

Other royal Miami families, like the Estefans, couldn't think of anything better than to spend the holidays right here in paradise. They'll do the typical Latin-family celebration on Nochebuena, and on Christmas Day the family will open presents with 2-year-old grandson Sasha. "It's always fun to share Christmas through a young child's eyes," says Gloria (thus the inspiration behind Estefan's holiday tune, "Christmas Through Your Eyes").

While many stars are relaxing, some are still performing in Miami as they did years ago. The Adrienne Arsht Center for the Performing Arts is ringing in the holidays this year with *The Colors of Christmas*, featuring performances by Peabo Bryson, Taylor Dayne, Jennifer Holliday, and Ruben Studdard. "Miami is known for drawing some of the best celebrity talent and entertainment over the holidays," says Scott Shiller, executive vice president of the Adrienne Arsht Center. "This season, the Arsht Center is carrying on that tradition with Disney's *Beauty and the Beast* and classics such as Miami City Ballet's *The Nutcracker*."

Of course, if you're looking for bright lights, there's no bigger stage on Christmas Day than American Airlines Arena for the return of LeBron James. The entire country will have its eyes on Miami, as James and the Cleveland Cavaliers roll into town to take on our Miami Heat. From the celebrities sitting courtside to the A-list crowd partying inside Hyde, the arena will host an unmatched holiday celebration regardless of the final score. But let's hope Santa brings us a victory. "There's no question that the American Airlines Arena will be the best place to be on Christmas Day," says DJ Irie, the Heat's official DJ. "Hyde will be going off. Everybody will be at the game, so the social scene that day will be super strong as well."

But there's more to this city than fame and fortune. One of the beauties of Miami being a melting pot is that the residents bring traditions from all over the world. Chef Michael Mina continues his late mother-in-law's holiday tradition by preparing a hearty cioppino—a seafood stew popular in San Francisco—for Christmas Eve dinner. At his restaurants, Michael Mina 74 and Stripsteak at the Fontainebleau Miami Beach, he'll mix traditional dishes with local flavors, just like he does at home. "We decorate the house and pull fresh flowers and greenery from our garden to accent the dining table," he says. "And we always have my wife's amazing Bloody Marys. They're a crowd favorite."

Chef Michelle Bernstein of Seagrape at Thompson Miami Beach comes from a Latin-Jewish household. "We had classic Nochebuena dinners, or as typical Jewish families often do, we went out for Chinese on Christmas night," she recalls. But when she met her husband and business partner, David Martinez, she spent the holiday with his family in Oaxaca, Mexico, and the



Festive dining at The Forge.

“CHRISTMAS HAS EVOLVED INTO A BEAUTIFUL, ECLECTIC, INTERNATIONAL FOOD-CENTRIC HOLIDAY.”—MICHELLE BERNSTEIN

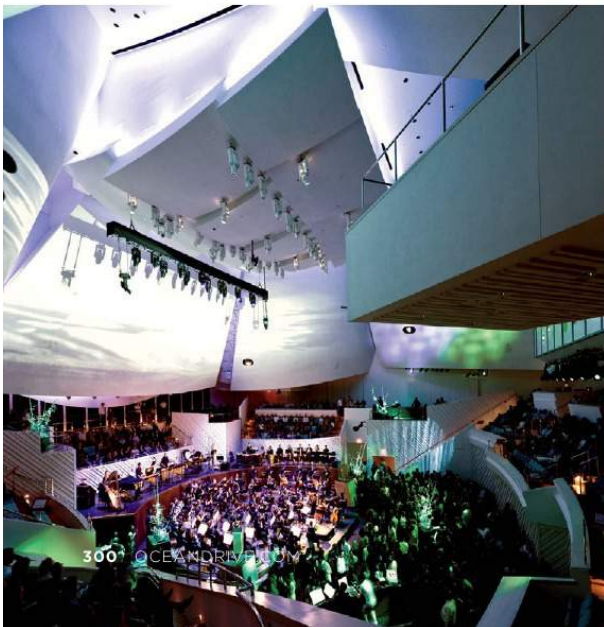
Miami City Ballet's production of George Balanchine's *The Nutcracker*.



Over the decades, Miami's holiday season has attracted top entertainers of the day, such as The Supremes (FROM LEFT, Diana Ross, Cindy Birdsong, and Mary Wilson, pictured in 1968).



“MIAMI IS KNOWN FOR DRAWING SOME OF THE BEST CELEBRITY TALENT AND ENTERTAINMENT OVER THE HOLIDAYS.”—SCOTT SHILLER



tradition changed. "That was my first taste of true authentic Mexican food, and ever since, our Christmas feast is filled with flavors and recipes of Oaxaca, my own mother's Jewish/Latin specialties, and some things I've picked up along the way," she says. "It has evolved into a beautiful, eclectic, international food-centric holiday."

Miami is packed with flavor over the holidays. There are giant Italian feasts planned at restaurants like Cavalli and Ceccoli's, and a holiday brunch at Tongue & Cheek, where last year they offered gingerbread pancakes with apple butter and peppermint, and the eatery's famous eggnog cocktail. But every culture has its special holiday dining hot spots. "If you want to turn it up a notch for an even more traditional Spanish dining experience, La Dorada in Coral Gables is an excellent choice," says Alejandro Muguerza, president of catering and event design company Le Basque. "Their wide selection of ancestral dishes includes the most customary, sea bream, which is commonly used for Christmas in the Basque Country in Spain."

And leave it to body-obsessed Miami to let you order your healthy holiday meals right to your door. DeliverLean, a popular healthy food delivery service, adds items like Paleo pumpkin muffins, maple-roasted butternut squash, and cranberry turkey meatloaf to the menu for holiday time. DeliverLean CEO Scott Harris eats clean over the holidays, but he also relaxes. "Ever since I moved to South Florida, I head down to Islamorada in the Keys for some downtime in December," he says. "I love going out on the boat with friends, fishing, and cooking fresh meals during my visit. The laid-back vibe of the Keys helps me relax and reflect on the past year and the year to come."

Rest and relaxation are always in the cards in South Florida with some of the best spas, pools, and pampering services in the world. But you can also get out and feel the holiday spirit at venues around town. The flourishing Russian population of Miami-Dade can experience a taste of home with Moscow Ballet's *Great Russian Nutcracker* at the Fillmore Miami Beach, while the New World Symphony's *Sights and Sounds of the Season* will feature music from a variety of heritages. You can hear Christmas carols in the Drawing Room at Soho Beach House, or have your jingle bells rocked on Saturdays in December at Little Havana's Ball & Chain, which is adding a pig roast and holiday sounds to the high-energy Cuban music at its La Pachanga party. Or you can throw on your most hideously festive pull-over and party with scenesters at the Broken Shaker's annual Ugly Sweater party. Then there's the 28th annual Matzoball, held at LIV this year, where you can toast your way through a Jewish Christmas Eve, and maybe even find a spouse. Oy vey, it's a miracle! "The Matzoball is one of my favorite nights of the year," says Jimmy Vargas, director of marketing at LIV Nightclub. "The dance floor is packed, there's great energy in the room, and the drinks don't stop until well into Christmas Day."

But ultimately the best part of the holiday season in Miami is that you're in Miami—the same Miami that exists year round, the Miami where you can relax on a beach chair at the Delano, where we don't just have presents under a tree (although shade is certainly a gift), we have them all around us. There's no snow to shovel from driveways or ice to scrape off windshields. It's sun and fun and smiles for everyone. It truly is the season to be jolly. *Happy Holidays!* **OD**

28TH ANNUAL MATZOBALL—

The tradition continues as "ballers" take over the Fontainebleau Miami Beach with dinner options at Michael Mina 74, all-night partying at LIV, and a Christmas Day pool party. December 24, 4441 Collins Ave., Miami Beach; matzoball.org

CHRISTMAS EVE JAZZ—

Let live jazz crooners lull you into your holiday cheer at Lilt Lounge while you tap up your spirit from the bar's specialty cocktails, like a Cuban eggnog or hot buttered rum and cider. December 24, Lilt Lounge at the Epic Hotel, 270 Biscayne Blvd. Way, Miami; liltlounge.com

JEWBILEE—

L'Chaim Kosher vodka, complimentary shots of Manishevitz, and Jewish-themed gifts (last year, they gave out Drake-dels, dreidels with Drake on them) take Christmas Eve to a few level. December 24, Blackbird Ordinary, 729 SW First Ave., Miami; blackbirdordinary.com

CHRISTMAS WITH CAVALLI—

Guests dining at famed designer Roberto Cavalli's South Beach restaurant, Cavalli Club, on Christmas will get to pick out a present on their way out. December 25, 150 Ocean Dr., Miami Beach; miami.cavallclub.com

THE BREAKERS CHRISTMAS—

The Breakers offers a Christmas Day dinner in the Ponce de Leon Ballroom with complimentary eggnog and apple pie. December 25, 1 S. Country Road, Palm Beach; thebreakers.com

MOSCOW BALLET'S GREAT RUSSIAN NUTCRACKER—

If your idea of holiday fun includes mice, Sugar Plum fairies, and pirouetting sweets, this traveling show lands in Miami Beach just after you open your presents. December 26, The Fillmore Miami Beach at the Jackie Gleason Theater, 1700 Washington Ave., Miami Beach; fillmoremb.com

HELLO, 2015—

Legendary jam band Phish plans to close out 2014 with a NYE show at American Airlines Arena, followed by three more concerts. January 1–3, American Airlines Arena, 601 Biscayne Blvd., Miami; ticketmaster.com



FROM LEFT: Gloria and Emilio Estefan celebrating the holidays; Nick D'Annunzio and Tara Solomon at the Ugly Sweater holiday party at The Broken Shaker last December.

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