

Chowchow Making

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but everything is still homegrown and home processed except the kidney and great northern beans.

While some of the participants are avowed lovers of chowchow, others admit they make it to serve company or give as Christmas gifts. "It makes a nice, colorful gift when a bow is tied around the jar," LaVerne said.

Eldest daughter, Faye wife of Jim Myers, has seen many changes in their get-togethers over the years. In the beginning, she was the one with small children. Now her four children are grown and no longer accompany their mother on these canning excursions. Both her sister Jeanette, wife of Don Weaver and her sister-in-law Julie, wife of Fred Heller, have two and three children respectively who no longer attend the annual event. But LaVerne, wife of Larry Kreider and mother of four, and Karen, married to Louis Ruiz and mother of three, have preschoolers who enjoy the opportunity of playing with their cousins and visiting with Grandpa while Grandma supervises the kitchen brigade.

With the last jar filled and the canner kettle bubbling merrily, Charity heats her homemade veg-

etable soup, makes a pot of coffee and retreats to the living room with her offspring to relax until the buzzer signals another batch to be run. While munching on cookies and sipping coffee, the women exchange names for Christmas by picking enough slips for each of their children.

The women, all who live within a few miles of their mothers, do more than chowchow making together on an annual basis. There's Christmas shopping in November, cooking baking in December and pea day in June.

Each annual tradition is accompanied by its own specified lunch. The yearly agenda lists vegetable soup as the order of the day for chowchow making; potato soup accompanies cooking baking day and pea soup with rivals goes with pea picking day.

"And Christmas Eve dinner is traditionally shrimp with each bringing a covered dish. LaVerne said. "It's tradition that no one dare break."

Traditions, they find, help bond family relationships. "It's nice to have the girls come home," Charity said. And the girls respond by saying, "It's nice to come home and do this together. It helps keep us in touch."

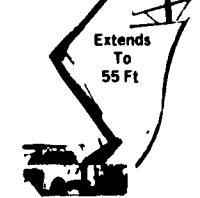


Assembly-line fashion makes chowchow making go faster, From left: Julie Heller, Faye Myer and Karen Ruiz.



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