

# Cooking Angel Brings Good Tidings Year-Round

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**WRIGHTSVILLE (York Co.)** — Holiday symbols, including angels, intertwine with the Christmas story. But for Debbie Reynolds, angels are a year-round symbol of joy and purpose.

Every day she accessorizes her outfit with one of the more than 50 different angels pins from her collection.

Debbie herself emulates an angel of sorts. According to the dictionary definition, an angel manifests goodness, purity, and unselfishness.

And those who know Debbie are often recipients of her goodness. To many, Debbie is a cooking angel who is always giving away one of her many culinary specialties.

Most people with the health problems similar to those that plagued Debbie would not continue cooking. Eleven years ago she was diagnosed with gastroparesis, an incurable disease that requires a bland diet.

Debbie considers it ironic that as a nurse, working with gastroenterology patients, she herself became afflicted with an incurable gastritis disease.

"I should be dead," said Debbie, whose weight spiraled to a mere 80 pounds at one point. Until the last few weeks, she was hooked up to feeding tubes daily for 18 hours out of 24.

"It's a miracle I'm alive. I would never have made it without God," she said. Her survival has given her purpose. Medical doctors often ask Debbie to encourage other patients who face insurmountable illnesses.

As a former Miss Hope for the Cancer Society, a spokesperson who teaches people early detection signs, talking before an audience was part of her training.

"If you feel sorry for yourself—you're done for," Debbie said of first-hand experience in coping with illness. On the other hand, it isn't enough to just not feel sorry for oneself.

"Christianity is a big part of my life and who I am," Debbie said of finding strength in coping. "I study the Bible twice a day."

She also volunteers for a local cardiac rehabilitation facility.

While many people associate

holiday celebrations with children and extended family members gathering together, Debbie has neither.

An only child, she and her husband Larry have no children. But Debbie focuses on what she does have: "a gem of a husband" (they've been married 25 years), "and wonderful loving friends and my church," she said.

Debbie grew up watching her mother and grandmother cook and help her dad make perogies from scratch in honor of his Polish background. As a child, Debbie was a national baton twirler, but she always took an interest in cooking.

What Debbie didn't learn at home, she learned from taking classes in culinary arts and from a neighbor.

"I take classes whenever I see them offered," she said. These include canning, Italian foods, pasta, baking, and low-fat cooking. A neighbor taught her to can meat, make fastnachts, and bread.

Several times weekly, Debbie bakes and cooks for the sheer joy of doing it and then gives the food away.

"I love to share," she said.

"I'm old-fashioned," Debbie said. "I think when a husband comes home at the end of the day, he deserves a good, hot meal from scratch, not out of a box."

Another project that utilizes her cooking expertise is a weekly Bible study at her church. Every Wednesday evening, a light meal is served to participants of the study. Although members take turns preparing the meals, Debbie volunteers her services weekly.

She also sends in many recipes to *Lancaster Farming* and other cooking publications.

Although the Reynolds do not live on a farm, they spend many hours with close friends on the farm. One of their annual highlights is helping with on-farm butchering between Christmas and New Year's week.

The Reynolds also feed baby calves and help with baling hay.

Life isn't complete without Buffy and Dodi, to which Debbie refers to as "our babes." The well-fed dogs are fed — not dog food — but from homecooked meals that Debbie prepares for her husband.



Debbie Reynolds prepares these culinary specialties to give to neighbors and acquaintances.

The Reynolds home is filled with cheery, country decor, complete with many of Debbie's handicrafts, crocheting, cross stitching, and quilting projects. Her kitchen cabinets painted in colors of brick red and cream serve as a sunny place to cook, can, and bake. Here are a few of her easy recipes that readers may enjoy during the busy holiday season.

- layer and on top. Sprinkle with grated chocolate.**
- Cream Of Mushroom Soup**  
½ pound fresh mushrooms (all varieties) chopped  
½ cup butter  
Saute chopped mushrooms in butter until tender. Sprinkle 2 tablespoons flour on top. Mix together. Slowly pour in:  
1 pint half and half  
Salt and pepper  
Add more milk to desired consistency.

- Mini Cream-Cheese Cupcakes**  
1 box chocolate cake mix  
8-ounces cream cheese  
1 egg  
½ cup sugar  
Mix cake mix according to package directions. Line mini cupcake pans with holiday paper cups. Fill about ⅓ with batter. Put ½ teaspoon cream cheese mixture on top of batter. Sprinkle with chocolate chips if desired. Bake at 350 degrees for 15 minutes.

- Chocolate Torte**  
1 box Devil's Food Cake  
Bake according to directions on box for two 9-inch layers. When cooled, cut layers into four. Combine:  
8-ounces cream cheese  
¾ cup brown sugar  
1 teaspoon vanilla  
¼ teaspoon salt  
2 cups heavy whipping cream, whipped  
2 tablespoons grated semi-sweet chocolate  
Beat cream cheese and sugar. Add vanilla and salt, and beat until fluffy. Fold in whipped cream. Put mixture between each



Part of Debbie's angel collection include these special edition Seraphins. Her husband presents one to her annually.



Life isn't complete without Buffy and Dodi, which Debbie calls "our babes."

