



Shirley Orfanella, a regular contributor to the recipe column, pauses in a room filled with fruits and vegetables she has preserved from her garden. Of Shirley's outstanding cooking and decorating abilities, many of her friends say, "She's better than Martha Stewart (well-known food and decorating guru)."

The cookies and candy, shown at right, are made in advance and frozen until the party.



**LOU ANN GOOD**  
Food And Family  
Features Editor

**QUARRYVILLE** (Lancaster Co.) — When Shirley Orfanella throws a party for 150, it's a stunning affair, from the decorations to the elaborate foods prepared by her.

Almost every year for the past 30, Shirley hosts a holiday party in her home during December for an average of 125-175 guests.

"She's better than Martha Stewart," several guests remarked as they admired her artistic touches and savored the food.

"She makes Martha look sick," said another guest.

While Martha has a staff of hundreds to help her, Shirley does everything herself. During the summer months she raises a large garden and preserves food and dries flowers to be used for her magnificent party.

But the main work begins six weeks before the party, when Shirley cleans everything in the house. That in itself appears to be a year-long job. She has an extensive collection of glassware, china, and collectibles that require careful cleaning — "everything but pewter and Hummels," she said.

"My goal is to have 10 china closets," Shirley said. She has nine filled with glistening clean antique treasures.

She lives in a 3,300 square-foot Victorian-style farmhouse with a wraparound porch. The house was built in 1817. The house is

decorated from top to bottom for guests to explore during the party.

Even the basement with its exposed timber beams with wooden pegs serves as a place for guests to gather. The basement features an ice house pit, which serves as a perfect spot to put a huge tree. A collection of antique ice tools hangs on the wall.

Paper snowflakes and bells hang from the basement rafters. Beverages are stored in ice in old washing machine tubs.

Each room of the house has at least one tree, from nine to 12-foot tall. Even the bathrooms have trees. Each tree is uniquely decorated, many with antique ornaments.

Two weeks before the party, Shirley makes extensive "to-do" lists for each day leading up to the party.

"No matter how late it is each night, I must get each thing on the list crossed off. You don't want to carry anything over to the next day or you'll end up with too much to do," she said.

She bakes 20 varieties of cookies and candies. She writes the recipes on index cards and tapes them to the kitchen cabinets. She mixes up each batch, places the dough in heavy-duty plastic bags, and refrigerates. When all the varieties are mixed, she begins the baking marathon. Even that has a plan.

When she finishes baking one batch of cookies, she selects the next batch that is to be baked at the same temperature. When fin-

ished baking, she packs the cookies into tins and places them on her porch where the cold weather freezes them.

During the last week, Shirley concentrates on the food. She makes meatballs ahead of time and freezes them. Pasta, broccoli, and chicken salads can be made two days ahead and refrigerated in heavy duty plastic bags. That way, when serving dishes need to be refilled, another bag of salad can be opened and served.

The extensive menu includes ham, meatballs, crab soup, marinated mushrooms, hot peppers, chicken salad with grapes and cashews, broccoli, pasta salad, and much more.

Like most hostesses, Shirley fears not having enough food. Even after careful calculations, she always adds extra — and always ends up having the extra plus some from her original calculations left over.

She also fears the weather, which can play havoc with guests' ability to attend the party. One year super thick fog, like pea soup, kept many guests away.

"We had so many leftovers," Shirley said.

This year's snow the week before the party required much clearing to make room in the field around the house for guests to park their vehicles.

Shirley generally serves the same menu, but makes occasional substitutions. Until this year, she served fresh strawberries with dip. This year she saw the berries cost \$50 a flat, so Shirley decided to substitute fruit salad for the berries.

"I ended up with about as much money in the fruit salad, and it didn't go over as big as the berries," Shirley said.

Some things are learned through trial and error. Shirley said that she learned that it is hard to keep the flame below chafing dishes lighted. So a few years ago, she invested in roaster ovens — which work much better. The first year, the roasters kept blowing fuses.

"I learned they can't be plugged into the same outlet," Shirley said.

She takes care of details — such as renting two big racks on which to hang guests' coats.

The task Shirley enjoys most is the food presentation.

"On the final day, I want nothing to do with cooking. It's time to make sure the candles are lit, the silver spoons are with each serving dish..."



Guests often meet at the party and form lifetime friendships. Here are some guests that have been attending for many years.

As a former window dresser, Shirley revels in putting the finishing touches to the tables.

"I do this (party) because I get to decorate the tables," Shirley said.

"I use the same principle I followed when I was a waitress. I try to think if I am the guest, what will I need to eat with this? Ice? Salt and pepper? Mustard? A round or flat dish?"

Shirley said of throwing a successful party, "Organization common sense and lots of charts are the secret."

In the final countdown, Shirley vows never to do it again, but after the party, many guests write thank you notes about how much they really look forward to the annual event and how much they enjoyed it.

"So by next year, I'm ready to start over again," Shirley said.

Here are some recipes from Shirley, whom our readers will recognize as a regular contributor to this paper.

**PASTA SALAD**

Boil your favorite pasta shape or use vermicelli broken into fourths. Drain and rinse under

cold water. Set aside.

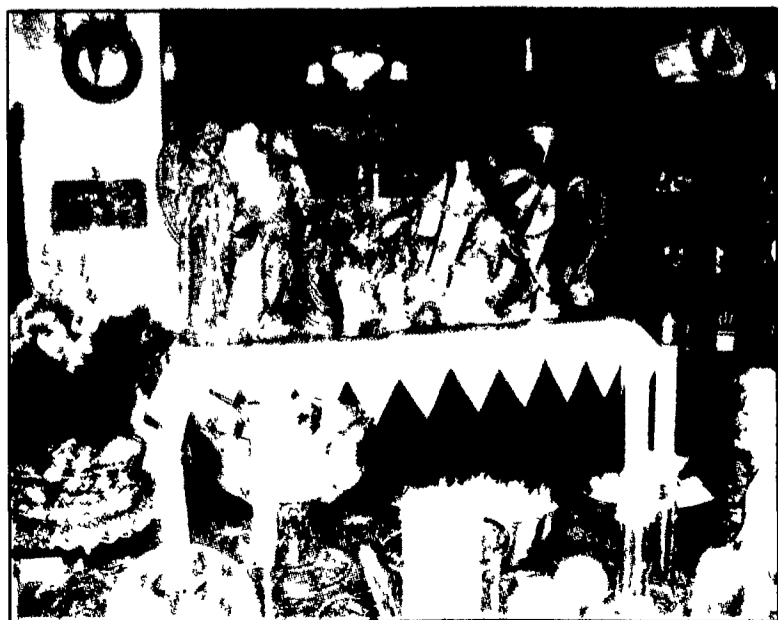
In the meantime, dice red, yellow, and green bell peppers. Cut grape tomatoes in half — dice a couple zucchini and cucumbers with rind on, several celery ribs, minced onion, and black olives. Cut slices of pepperoni into small pieces. Add some garlic salt, poppy and sesame seeds, and mix into pasta.

Pour Italian dressing (not creamy) over all. Refrigerate. May also add good quality Parmesan grated cheese.

**MEATBALLS**

But a good grade of ground round beef, as much as needed. Mix with a few slices of white bread, torn into pieces and soaked in milk. Add minced onion, salt and pepper, and chopped parsley, and several eggs. When it is a nice consistency, form into small meatballs and bake in medium onion on a cookie sheet with sides, approximately 20 minutes. Drain well. In the meantime, make your favorite barbecue sauce or sweet and sour sauce. Pour over and refrigerate

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These are a few of the hundreds of angels Shirley has collected and puts on display during her holiday party.

