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preface

After 20 years as a professional chef and caterer, I've learned how to organize spectacular parties on short notice, cook delicious food on a budget, minimize stress on everyone involved, and still enjoy myself. But I realized through my teaching and cooking demonstrations that not all cooks felt as confident about hosting their own parties.

Everywhere I went, people asked me questions about entertaining. How much time would it take? How much money would they have to spend? How could they cook for more than eight guests? Is any party really worth all the effort?

Of course it's worth it! Parties are the gift of celebrating life's grand moments, both big and small. Whether you want to host a baby shower, a second wedding, or have the in-laws over for your first Thanksgiving, you'll find memorable meals of all sorts in *Do It For Less! Parties*.

I know most people are just plain scared to entertain, and rightly so, if they've had little experience in entertaining. For years I've wanted to write a book that bridged the gap between the professional caterer and the home entertainer. Now, I'm thrilled to finally be able to share with people the hundreds of tips I have gathered and tucked away through my years of experience about recipes, party favors, and décor planning. (It's amazing what you learn after producing 10,000 parties and events.)

With *Do It For Less! Parties*, we've worked hard to make entertaining a manageable affair for everyone, from beginners to seasoned entertainers. The first half of the book gives you the tools you'll need to plan your own party, and the second half gives you twice-tested, dependable recipes that take all the guesswork out of quantity cooking. This book will show you how to apply the same professional party techniques to your own event that helped me manage a successful catering business, and teach you how to save time, money, and energy in the process.

So, let me introduce you to this terrific book and also to Cindie Flannigan and Martha

Hopkins. Had Cindie and Martha not devoted their time and research to this book, it would never have happened. It took a village of chefs—and illustrators, photographers, designers, and editors—to capture it all in one carefully crafted volume, and I know you will enjoy the organization and ease it brings to your next party.

Please e-mail us your successful entertaining stories at info@diflparties.com. We want to hear from you!

Denise Vivaldo

