

## FOOD &amp; DRINK

## Feast that is fit for a royal table

Prince Charles and Princess Diana's former personal chef Carolyn Robb tells **MARION McMULLEN** about her famous clients' favourite dishes and how to add a royal touch to food



**SOUPER STARTER**  
**ASPARAGUS & NEW POTATO SOUP**  
**WITH PARMESAN STRAWS**  
**(SERVES 4)**

**INGREDIENTS****For the Parmesan straws (makes 18):**

200g/7oz ready-made, all-butter puff pastry  
 1 medium free-range egg  
 2tbsp finely chopped chives  
 3tbsp finely grated Parmesan  
 1tsp white sesame seeds  
 1tsp black sesame seeds  
 A pinch of paprika

**For the soup:**

800g/1¾lb asparagus (about 50 spears)  
 2 medium onions  
 1 small leek  
 2tbsp olive oil  
 750ml/26fl oz chicken stock  
 150ml/5fl oz crème fraîche  
 1tbsp finely chopped chives  
 Salt & freshly ground black pepper

**For the garnish:**

The asparagus tips from the 800g asparagus  
 6 small new potatoes  
 30g/1oz butter  
 A handful of fresh chervil

**METHOD**

**1.** Make the Parmesan straws. Roll out the pastry on a floured board to a size of 25cm (10ins) square and a thickness of 3mm (¼inch). Glaze all over with the egg and sprinkle with the chives, Parmesan, sesame seeds

and paprika. Chill for 10 minutes in the refrigerator (this makes the pastry easier to cut) then, using a long-bladed knife, cut 18 long points, then chill. Preheat oven to 190°C/375°F and bake the straws for 12 to 15 minutes.  
**2.** Make the soup. Snap off and discard the tough, woody bottom section of the asparagus stalks. Cut off the tips to use for the garnish. Chop the remaining stalks into 1cm (½in) sections.  
**3.** Peel and finely dice the onions, wash and finely chop the leek. Cook them slowly in the olive oil in a heavy-based pan over a low heat with a lid on, until the onion is translucent and the leek is very soft. Don't allow them to brown as this will spoil the soup's colour.  
**4.** Bring the chicken stock to the boil in another pan.

Cook the asparagus tips in the stock for three to five minutes until tender, plunge into cold water, drain and put to one side.

**5.** Dice the new potatoes, cook them in the stock until tender, drain and keep on one side. Once the onion and leek are soft, add the chicken stock and asparagus stems to the pan. Cook for 10 to 12 minutes until the asparagus is tender. Don't overcook it or it becomes a very dull colour.

**6.** Remove from the heat and cool before blending it to a smooth consistency using a liquidiser or a stick blender.

**7.** To serve, reheat the soup thoroughly. Whisk in the crème fraîche and chives, add salt and pepper to taste.

**8.** Meanwhile, reheat the asparagus tips and diced new potato in the butter.

**9.** Pour the soup into pre-warmed cups or bowls and top with a spoon of diced potato, a few asparagus tips and a pretty sprig of chervil.

**10.** Serve with a couple of Parmesan straws.

**C**REATING a feast fit for royal tastes is a talent Carolyn Robb has in abundance.

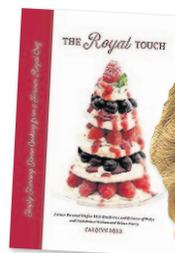
The former royal chef cooked for Prince Charles, Princess Diana and young princes William and Harry for more than a decade and still treasures the thank you notes they sent her for her fabulous meals.

Lamb was always a favourite with Charles while Diana was a fan of Carolyn's asparagus, Swiss chard and goats cheese tart.

Harry and William often visited the royal kitchens when they were little and Carolyn's daughters, Lucy and Mandy, now help her in her own kitchen.

Carolyn smiles: "The young princes always managed to come up with ideas for their birthday cakes that pushed the art of constructing something out of cake to the limit - police motorbikes, helicopters and ships."

Prince William even had childhood favourite, chocolate biscuit cake, as the groom cake for his



Royal chef Carolyn Robb, above, author of *The Royal Touch*, top left

wedding to Kate Middleton. It included 1,700 biscuits and more than 37lbs of chocolate.

"My 13 years in the royal household were filled with incredible experiences and I have so many happy memories of this time," adds Carolyn.

"I subsequently lived and worked in Dubai and California, both of which gave me fascinating insights into new and very different cuisines, cultures and lifestyles. I came away with many fresh ideas and new perspectives on food."

Carolyn, who grew up in South Africa, says the secret of good food is fresh produce. "I'm not a fan of extreme diets and processed foods.

"A good balance of nutrition and exercise is best. My parents lived into their 90s and never had prepared, processed food from shops."

She adds: "Working for the royal family was a dream job. I think I was in the right place at the right time."

■ Recipes from *The Royal Touch*, by Carolyn Robb; photography by Simon Brown (ACC Editions, £25).

I HAVE really been enjoying wines from Australia recently which, like many other New World countries, seems to have more producers recognising the importance of freshness in their wines.

In Australia this is all the more important given that huge swathes of the vineyards are at the upper limits of temperatures appropriate for wine-making.

One of the most successful wineries of recent years is Wakefield, in the cooler climate Clare Valley, where the winemakers seem to produce a lot of wine which tastes fresh and preserves the vibrant quality of the fruit.

The estate now has two wines available at Aldi which also lay claim

to be 100 per cent carbon neutral; no mean feat when you consider larger scale agricultural practices.

Measures include water preservation, vital in a country plagued by drought, and organic cultivation, which includes keeping sheep around the vineyards. The estate launched the 80 Acres brand in 2007 with the aim of producing wine that was audited for its carbon footprint during every stage of its life cycle. The two Shiraz-based wines are real crowd pleasers.

**RAISE A GLASS**

WITH  
**ANDY CRONSHAW**



**Wakefield 80 Acres Shiraz Viognier 2015 (£6.99 Aldi)**

This blend, based on the classic recipe for one of the world's greatest wines, Cote Rotie, seems to have become increasingly popular in Australia over the last 15 years. Shiraz is undoubtedly Australia's

premier red grape.

It prefers slightly warmer climes than say Pinot Noir, but it has a tendency to be a little flaccid and overbearing when acidity is lacking.

Viognier is a great pairing, adding perfume and a silky texture.

And that's what you get here with floral aromas and plummy fruit supported by sturdy but fairly discreet oak.

There's a touch of spicy pepper on the palate and a long finish tart with acidity.

For the money I'd suggest you can't really go wrong. It will please those who like their wines big and fruity while appealing to those who



**Wakefield Shiraz Viognier**

like a little subtlety. The perfect red to snap off for the barbecue.

**80 Acres Cabernet Shiraz Merlot 2015 (£6.99 Aldi)**

Merlot gives Shiraz a rounder, riper profile and here it brings out the darker chocolatey sweetness of the grapes.

While this is more a classical 'Australian' red there's a seamlessness to the palate which will appeal to

anyone who recognises craft in wine-making. Its rich blackcurrant fruit has a hint of spice and will take on hefty stews or meaty pasta.

**INGREDIENTS**

4 small globe artichokes  
1 lemon  
A little olive oil  
150g/5½oz green beans  
400g/14oz celeriac (1 large root)  
120g/4oz butter  
4 fillet steaks (185g/6oz each)  
100g/3½oz fresh porcini mushrooms  
100g/3½oz fresh chestnut mushrooms  
A few sprigs of fresh thyme  
150ml/5fl oz double cream  
Salt and freshly ground black pepper

**METHOD**

**1.** Preparing artichokes takes time and some skill. However, if time is of the essence, or fresh artichokes are not available, then you can use the small artichokes in oil that you find in most Italian delicatessens.  
**2.** Top and tail the green beans, wash and cook in boiling, lightly salted water until they are tender. Refresh in iced water and keep on one side.  
**3.** Peel the celeriac, then using a large sharp knife, cut it into very thin slivers. Melt

**MAGICAL MAIN**

**SIMPLE ROAST FILLET OF BEEF WITH CELERIAC, GREEN BEANS AND ARTICHOKES AND A MUSHROOM CREAM SAUCE (SERVES 4)**

60g (4tbsps) of the butter in a large, preferably non-stick, frying pan and cook the celeriac until it is very tender and golden around the edges.  
**4.** Melt 30g (2tbsps) of the butter and brush it onto the steaks, season them with salt and pepper. Heat a non-stick frying pan and cook them for four to five minutes, turning them to seal them on all sides. Transfer the steaks to a baking tray and cook them at 220°C/425°F for a further eight to 10 minutes, for a medium-cooked steak.

**5.** While the steak is in the oven, clean and slice the mushrooms. Sauté them in the remaining butter, using the frying pan that the steak was cooked in. Season with salt and pepper, add the thyme and the cream and cook the sauce for a couple of minutes to reduce it slightly.  
**6.** To serve, reheat the beans, artichoke hearts and celeriac in a little olive oil. Place the celeriac on warmed plates with the steak on top. Surround with the beans and artichokes. Spoon the mushroom sauce over the steaks and serve immediately.

**INGREDIENTS**

**For the posset:**  
500ml/17.5fl oz double cream  
110ml/4fl oz milk  
140g/5oz caster sugar  
30ml/2tbsp freshly pressed lemon juice  
30ml/2tbsp freshly pressed lime juice  
Zest of 1 lime  
Zest of 1 unwaxed lemon  
200g/7oz fresh blueberries  
**For the sesame caramel shards:**  
115g/4oz caster sugar  
60ml/4tbsp water  
30g/2tbsp sesame seeds

**METHOD**

**1.** Make the posset. Bring the cream, milk and sugar to the boil and simmer for three minutes. Watch it closely as it boils over easily.  
**2.** Remove from the heat, grate the citrus zest directly into the cream and add the citrus juice, stir well.  
**3.** Pour the mixture into the ramekins or cups. Leave to

**DELICIOUS DESSERT**

**LEMON & LIME POSSET WITH SESAME SHARDS AND FRESH BLUEBERRIES (SERVES 4)**

cool before putting in the refrigerator to chill for two to three hours.  
**4.** Make the sesame caramel shards. Place the sugar and water in a small heavy-based pan on a medium heat. Stir to dissolve the sugar and then allow to simmer until it becomes a rich gold colour. Keep a close eye on it as it

very quickly darkens and burns. Add the sesame seeds and then pour out in a thin layer onto the baking tray lined with a silicon sheet.  
**5.** Leave for about 15 minutes to harden, before breaking it into small shards. If it is a damp or humid day it should be moved into an airtight container as soon as it is cold and hard or it will quickly become soft and sticky.  
**6.** Present the posset on a dessert plate, spiked with a couple of caramel shards and accompanied by the blueberries and you can also add shortbread fingers.



**“Love you Daddy, you’re the best Dad in the world. From Hettie xxxxxx”**

**Example****MEN**

Jefferson Jason  
Love you Daddy,  
you’re the best  
Dad in the world.  
From Hettie  
xxxxx

# TEXT

## Father’s Day Messages

**SEND A LOVING MESSAGE IN JUST 3 SIMPLE STEPS!**

- 1** START YOUR MESSAGE WITH **MEN** FOLLOWED BY THEIR **NAME**
- 2** ENTER YOUR MESSAGE COMPRISING OF NO MORE THAN **30** WORDS.
- 3** SEND YOUR TEXT TO **82070**

Text charged at £1.50 plus your standard message rate.

Manchester Evening News

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