

# The Royal touch

AS THE QUEEN OF ENGLAND CELEBRATES HER 90TH BIRTHDAY, WE CATCH UP WITH ROYAL CHEF, CAROLYN ROBB, PERSONAL COOK TO TRH THE PRINCE AND THE PRINCESS OF WALES, PRINCE WILLIAM AND PRINCE HARRY FOR 11 YEARS. CAROLYN, AUTHOR OF *THE ROYAL TOUCH - SIMPLY STUNNING HOME COOKING FROM A ROYAL CHEF*, WAS BORN AND RAISED IN SOUTH AFRICA. HER BOOK IS DEDICATED TO HER MOTHER, A CHEF AND HER GREATEST INSPIRATION

BY JENNY HANDLEY PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF *THE ROYAL TOUCH - SIMPLY STUNNING HOME COOKING FROM A ROYAL CHEF* BY CAROLYN ROBB

A VERY SPECIAL NOTE OF THANKS FROM HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS. HE BROKE HIS RIGHT ARM WHILE PLAYING POLO BUT THAT DIDN'T STOP HIM FROM WRITING - HE USED HIS LEFT HAND INSTEAD!

MEMORANDUM

From: H.R.H. THE PRINCE OF WALES

To: Carolyn

You excelled yourself this evening for dinner - the first course was a masterpiece! Well Done!

Charles





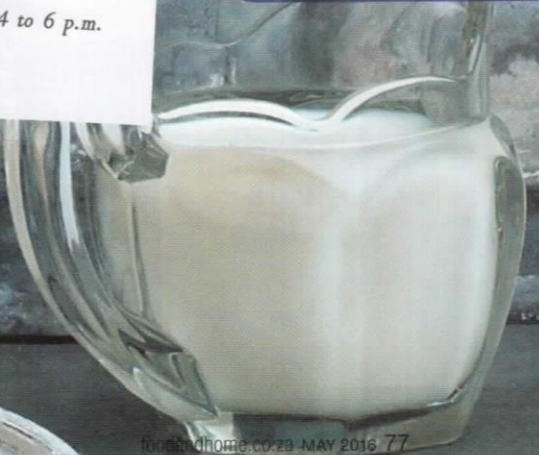
CAROLYN ROBB

“I was the youngest of five children, my mother was from England and my dad from Cape Town. I was born near Joburg and lived there until I was four when we moved to Hilton, where I attended Laddsworth Primary School and St Anne’s. I began studying French and German at Maritzburg Varsity.” Carolyn spent a lot of time in the kitchen with her mom, who was an amazing cook. Carolyn used to enter the junior cookery classes in the home-crafts section of the Royal Show in Pietermaritzburg, always winning a few awards, and, as a teenager, she and her mom competed against each other in the adult classes.

Carolyn left SA and her studies for a ski-season job in the Swiss Alps and, then, headed to the UK to earn a Cordon Bleu diploma at the Tante Marie Culinary Academy just outside London, which she completed with distinction. It was while at cookery school that Carolyn was invited to Kensington Palace for an interview with TRH The Duke and Duchess of Gloucester, who were looking for a chef, and she spent two happy years cooking for them and their three children. Neighbours, TRH the Prince and Princess of Wales, were invited for dinner one night and obviously admired Carolyn’s talents, as she was then invited for an interview with



**FROM TOP**  
CAROLYN'S GRADUATION FROM TANTE MARIE CULINARY ACADEMY; A CHRISTMAS CARD FROM DIANA, PRINCESS OF WALES; AN INVITATION TO THE GARDEN PARTY AT BUCKINGHAM PALACE





## INTEREST

Princess Diana at Kensington Palace, and to Highgrove House to cook a meal for both Prince Charles and Princess Diana. Carolyn started cooking for them in September 1989, when Prince William was seven and Prince Harry was four. "Although I missed melktert and the occasional koeksister, I never made them for the family!" laughs Carolyn.

As young boys, William and Harry spent many a happy hour in the kitchen with her, and she loved cooking with them, mostly sweet things. "Prince Charles and Princess Diana had incredibly busy schedules, so never had time to tinker around in the kitchen – although, I'm sure they could easily have prepared a meal for themselves had they needed to!" claims Carolyn.

The young princes had mostly traditional British food as they were growing up – roast chicken, roast beef, shepherd's pie, sausages and mash. They also enjoyed Italian food – home-made pasta and pizza. Princess Diana had a very healthy diet. "Two of her favourites

*Carolyn -*  
 Wishing you a very Happy Christmas  
 and New Year  
 and countless thanks for all  
 your spectacular cooking throughout 1994  
*for Charles*



A CHRISTMAS CARD FROM HRH THE PRINCE OF WALES

that appear in my book are a simple spring lamb salad and stuffed aubergine," says Carolyn. Prince Charles, who also had a very healthy diet, enjoyed eating game, some Provençal-style food and Italian food too. Carolyn was sent by Prince Charles to work in both Italy and France to learn some of their traditional, authentic dishes and methods of cooking. "What a huge 'perk' that was!" she exclaims.

While this royal chef has cooked for Her Majesty several times, she does not profess to knowing what her preferences are, and always cooked simple, traditional food for her. When asked about the royal kitchens, Carolyn explains, "The kitchens were surprisingly normal and ordinary – no spectacular gadgets and they were 'domestic' kitchens rather than large catering-style kitchens. We kept the pantry well stocked, but had a budget within which we had to work and were careful not to let food go to waste."

Carolyn catered for a variety of high-profile charity fundraising- and business events and garden parties – some of which were at Buckingham Palace or Windsor Castle. She discussed the choice of menu for these events with Prince Charles. "Lemon tartlets will always be reminiscent of garden parties for me. I vividly remember the first time I attended a garden party at Buckingham Palace; it was a gloriously sunny, English

summer's afternoon. One year, I had the joy of having my dear mom attend another of the Queen's famed garden parties."

After leaving the royal household, Carolyn was asked to do the wedding for Tom Parker Bowles, son of the Duchess of Cornwall, and was responsible for arranging all aspects of it and managing the event on the day.

Carolyn lives in Oxfordshire with her two young daughters, Lucy and Mandy, three cats and a dog. She has established a brand (The Royal Touch, the same name as her first cookbook) and is currently working on a diversity of interesting projects that include a café in Hong Kong and a range of cookware in South Korea, plus the concept for her next cookbook. Carolyn works with several travel companies from the USA and Australia and still creates bespoke events for private clients.

With the focus now on her young family, rather than the royals, Carolyn last visited South Africa to see her brother five years ago. Mention melktert and koeksisters and, who knows, she may return!



### SPRING LAMB SALAD AND LEMON TARTLETS



**FOOD & HOME ENTERTAINING READERS HAVE BEEN OFFERED A 50% DISCOUNT ON THE ROYAL TOUCH COOKBOOK BY CAROLYN ROBB, PUBLISHED BY ACC EDITIONS. VISIT ACCDISTRIBUTION.COM/UK/STORE/REGISTER WHERE YOU CAN REGISTER, AND ENTER THE PROMOTIONAL CODE RT50 UPON PURCHASE.**

