



## CAROLYN ROBB: *Cuisine Befitting Royalty*

*Childhood aspirations of cooking for the Queen of England launched an epicurean adventure that led Carolyn Robb from her mother's cozy kitchen to the castles of her dreams.*

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**W**hile growing up in South Africa, Carolyn Robb began exploring the fundamentals of gastronomy as soon as she could grasp a wooden spoon. She learned to decipher recipes at a tender age, all the while envisioning serving Queen Elizabeth one day.

When Carolyn received a culinary-school degree in Cordon Bleu Cookery, she entered the legendary gates of London's Kensington Palace for a post with the Duke and Duchess of Gloucester. It was a daunting prospect for the 21-year-old but an opportunity she savored.

In summer 1989, after being interviewed by Princess Diana and making a trial meal for Their Royal Highnesses, Carolyn became chef to the Prince and Princess of Wales. At the time, the couple's sons, William and Harry, were 7 and 4, respectively. During her thirteen-year tenure, Carolyn traveled extensively with the royal family and watched the boys mature to early adulthood. "Each day was different, which I loved," she says.

Carolyn describes Princess Diana as an attentive mother with a sense of humor. Once, a very young



*Opposite, top right: Former Royal Chef Carolyn Robb regularly assembled succulent Aubergine, Tomato, and Goat-Cheese Stack (this page) for Princess Diana.*

*Opposite, bottom left: For gift giving, Carolyn suggests presenting a jar of Simple Apple Chutney with artisan cheese, crackers, and a small wooden cheese board. Her grandmother's instructions—handwritten nearly a century ago—yield a sweetly spiced relish that complements a variety of menus.*



Prince Harry visited the kitchen seeking a sweet treat, but the chef urged him to ask for permission first. “He appeared moments later with a slip of paper in his hand,” Carolyn recalls. “It read, ‘Mummy says it’s okay!’ in Princess Diana’s handwriting. I have always treasured this wonderful little note!”

When Prince William wed Catherine Middleton, he chose for his groom’s cake a nursery favorite Carolyn had made often. She shares her Chocolate Biscuit Cake, a no-bake dessert of dark chocolate and British wafers, in *The Royal Touch: Simply Stunning Home Cooking from a Former Royal Chef* (Antique Collectors’ Club Ltd.). The cookbook offers many other cherished specialties, as well.

Although Carolyn’s experience reflects a broad range of cuisine, she believes the best dishes are usually the most straightforward: “Universally, I think that everyone’s preference would be for something that is freshly prepared with local, seasonal produce.”

*Hearty fare showcased in Carolyn’s recently released cookbook includes (clockwise, from below left): Farro with Winter Vegetables, Herbs, and Poached Chicken; Double-Baked Cheese Soufflé on a Salad of Baby Leaves and Beetroot; and Deliciously Moist and Rich Ginger Cake.*

**See Recipe Index, page 85, for recipe information.**



## CAROLYN ROBB: CUISINE BEFITTING ROYALTY

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*Recipes courtesy Carolyn Robb*

### Simple Apple Chutney p.81

Makes 2 (1-pt/450-g) jars

1.75 pounds/800 g **cooking apples**  
2 large **shallots** (approximately 7 oz/200 g)  
3 **red chile peppers** or 1 medium **jalapeño**  
7 tablespoons/100 ml **water**  
1 pound/455 g soft **brown sugar**  
¾ cup/115 g plump **raisins**  
½ teaspoon/2.5 ml freshly ground  
**black pepper**  
1 teaspoon/5 ml crushed **coriander seeds**  
2 tablespoons/30 ml **salt**  
½ teaspoon/2.5 ml **cayenne pepper**  
1¾ cups/400 ml **cider vinegar**

1. Peel, core, and dice the apples. Peel and slice the shallots. Halve the peppers, remove the seeds, and slice thinly.
2. Place the apples, shallots, and peppers in a medium, heavy-based saucepan or small preserving pan with the water, and simmer for 5–10 minutes so that the apples and shallots begin to soften. Add brown sugar, raisins, black pepper, coriander seeds, salt, cayenne pepper, and cider vinegar.
3. Bring to a boil while stirring, and then leave to simmer gently for about 30 minutes. Check frequently to be sure that it isn't sticking or burning on the bottom of the pan.
4. It is ready when much of the liquid has evaporated and the chutney has thickened considerably.
5. Divide between 2 sterilized and pre-warmed glass jars with lids that seal.
6. Let cool completely before covering and sealing.
7. Keeps for 12 months or more. Only needs to be refrigerated after opening.

### Aubergine, Tomato, and Goat-Cheese Stack p.82

Makes 4 servings

2 large **aubergines** (eggplants)  
**Salt**, divided

Freshly ground **black pepper**, divided  
**Olive oil**, divided  
2 **onions**  
2 cloves of **garlic**  
1 (28-oz/800-g) can **plum tomatoes**  
3 sprigs of fresh **thyme**, divided  
**Sugar**  
1 **yellow pepper**  
1 **red pepper**  
1 **red onion**  
3½ ounces/100 g **bulgur wheat**  
1 (5½-oz/150-g) log **goat cheese**  
½ cup/60 g finely grated **Parmesan**  
Handful fresh **basil leaves**

1. Preheat the oven to 400° (200°C).
2. Wash the eggplants, and cut them in half lengthwise. Score the flesh with a sharp knife, and place on a baking tray. Season with salt and freshly ground black pepper, and drizzle with olive oil.
3. Bake the eggplants for about 30 minutes, or until the flesh is soft.
4. While the eggplants are baking, make the tomato sauce: Finely dice the onions and crush the garlic in a medium, heavy-based saucepan. Sauté them together in olive oil until the onions are soft and translucent. Add the tomatoes and thyme, and season with salt, pepper, and sugar to taste. Cook slowly with the lid on for 30 minutes, then for another 15 minutes with the lid off to allow some of the liquid to evaporate so that the sauce thickens.
5. Dice the yellow pepper and red pepper, and sauté them in a little olive oil, until they are soft. Set aside.
6. Finely chop the red onion, and sauté it in a little olive oil. Add the bulgur wheat and water, as per the specific cooking instructions of the bulgur wheat you are using. (It generally cooks in about 12 minutes, but check this, as it varies with different brands.)
7. Once the eggplants are ready, scrape the flesh out carefully so as not to damage the skins. Chop the flesh, and mix in fresh thyme leaves. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Return the skins to the baking tray, ready to fill.
8. Begin with a layer of bulgur-wheat mixture in the base of the eggplant skins.
9. Slice the goat cheese into 12 rounds, and then halve those into semicircles. Place 3 pieces in each eggplant.
10. Next, add a layer of eggplant flesh.
11. Cover this with some tomato sauce.
12. Sprinkle a generous layer of grated Parmesan onto the sauce.

13. Now another layer of bulgur wheat.
14. Top this with the diced sautéed peppers and more grated Parmesan.
15. Finish with a generous covering of tomato sauce and a few more pieces of goat cheese.
16. Bake at 400° (200°C) for 25 minutes.
17. Just before serving, toss a few little basil leaves on top, and accompany the eggplants with the remaining tomato sauce and some extra grated Parmesan.

*Note: If you replace the bulgur wheat with quinoa or rice, then this is perfect for anyone with a gluten or wheat intolerance.*

### Double-Baked Cheese Soufflé on a Salad of Baby Leaves and Beetroot p.83

Makes 6 servings

1 thick slice of **brioche**  
5 tablespoons/55 g **butter**, divided  
¼ cup/35 g **all-purpose flour**  
¾ cup/150 ml **milk**  
3.5 tablespoons/50 g finely grated  
**Parmesan**, divided  
2 ounces/50 g **chèvre** (blanc goat cheese)  
2 **free-range egg yolks** (USA large/  
UK medium)  
1 tablespoon/15 ml finely chopped **chives**  
**Black pepper**  
**Paprika**  
**Nutmeg**  
**Salt**, divided  
4 **free-range egg whites** (USA large/  
UK medium)  
6 small cooked **beetroots**  
**Walnut oil**  
**Balsamic vinegar**  
Freshly ground **black pepper**  
**Sugar**  
3½ ounces/100 g **ruby chard and lamb's  
lettuce** (or favorite salad leaves)

1. Preheat the oven to 350° (180°C).
2. Make the croutons: Tear the brioche into small pieces and bake for 8–10 minutes, or until crisp and golden. Set aside. Reset the oven to 400° (200°C).
3. While the croutons are baking, prepare the soufflé.
4. Soften 2 tablespoons/20 g of the butter, and thoroughly grease the insides of 6 (⅔-cup/150-ml) ramekins. Place them on a baking tray.
5. Melt the remaining 3 tablespoons/35 g of butter in a small pan. Add the flour, stir well, and cook for 2 minutes. Warm the

milk, and add it gradually, off the heat, stirring constantly to prevent lumps forming.

6. Return to the heat, and cook for another minute or two. Keep stirring.
7. Remove from the heat, add 2.5 tablespoons Parmesan and chèvre, then egg yolks and chives. Season with pepper, paprika, and nutmeg. (Goat cheese can be quite salty, so you may not need salt.)
8. Whisk the egg whites until they are stiff. Fold them into the cheese mixture carefully, in three batches.
9. Divide the mixture between the ramekins. Smooth off the top using a palette knife, and run your finger around the inside of the top of each ramekin to create a better-shaped soufflé.
10. Bake for 20–25 minutes, until golden and evenly risen.
11. Let cool slightly before removing from the ramekins. At this stage, soufflés can be kept chilled for 24 hours in a sealed box. They deflate as they cool, but they will rise again when rebaked.
12. To serve the soufflés, preheat the oven to 350° (180°C). Place them on a silicon mat or nonstick baking tray, and sprinkle them with 1 tablespoon Parmesan. Bake for 20 minutes, until they are light and puffy.
13. Dice the beetroots, and dress them with oil, vinegar, salt, freshly ground pepper, and sugar.
14. Wash and dry the ruby chard and lamb's lettuce.
15. As soon as the soufflés are cooked, place them carefully on the salad leaves, and surround with the beetroots and croutons.

### Farro with Winter Vegetables, Herbs, and Poached Chicken p.83

Makes 6 servings

2 large **shallots** (approximately 7 oz/200 g)  
18 **baby carrots**  
5½ ounces/150 g **waxy potatoes**  
7 ounces/200 g **butternut squash**  
2 sticks **celery**  
1 **leek**  
2 tablespoons/30 ml **mild olive oil**  
2 tablespoons/30 g **butter**  
A few sprigs of fresh **thyme**  
½ cup/150 ml **white wine**  
2 cups/600 ml **chicken stock**  
2 (approximately 5-oz/150-g) **chicken breasts**  
½ cup/100 g **farro**  
12 small **broccoli florets**

1. Finely dice the shallots. Top and tail the baby carrots and wash them, but you don't

need to peel them. Dice the potatoes and butternut squash into ½-inch/1-cm cubes. Wash, desting, and slice the celery. Chop the leek into thin rings, and rinse well.

2. Heat the olive oil and butter in a large, heavy-based saucepan. Sauté all the vegetables over a high heat for several minutes, stirring well to coat everything in butter. Add the sprigs of thyme.
3. Cover, and cook over a medium heat for about 10 minutes to soften the vegetables. Add the white wine, stock, and chicken breasts, and cook slowly with the lid on for another 20 minutes. Remove the chicken, and let it cool.
4. Add the farro, and simmer for 12–15 minutes, until it is tender. While this is cooking, dice the chicken.
5. Return the chicken to the pan, add the broccoli, and cook everything together slowly for another 10 minutes. (I add the broccoli right at the end so that it maintains a little crunch and keeps its bright-green color.)
6. Serve in warmed soup bowls.

*Note: If you can make this the day before you need it, the flavors will develop and it will be even more delicious.*

### Deliciously Moist and Rich Ginger Cake p.83

Makes 1 (7-inch/18-cm) round cake

3 ounces/85 g **stem ginger\*** in syrup  
(3–4 pieces)  
¾ cup/55 g **crystallized ginger**  
4½ ounces/125 g **butter** (1 stick plus  
1 tablespoon)  
½ cup/200 g plus 3 tablespoons/50 ml  
**golden syrup**<sup>†</sup>, divided  
3 tablespoons/45 ml **ginger syrup**, from  
the jar of stem ginger  
¾ cup/125 g **light muscovado sugar**<sup>‡</sup>  
2 **free-range eggs** (USA large/UK medium)  
1 cup/225 ml **milk**  
2 cups/225 g **all-purpose flour**  
1 teaspoon/5 ml **baking soda**  
2 teaspoons/10 ml **baking powder**  
2 teaspoons/10 ml ground **ginger**  
1 teaspoon/5 ml ground **mixed spice**<sup>‡‡</sup>  
A pinch of **paprika**  
A pinch of **sea salt**  
2 pieces of **stem ginger**, sliced paper thin

1. Preheat the oven to 325° (160°C).
2. Line the base and sides of a cake pan. (I use a deep, loose-bottomed, heavy-gauge tin.)

3. Place the stem ginger and crystallized ginger in a food processor, and process to a paste. Alternatively, grate all the ginger finely.
4. Place the butter, golden syrup, ginger syrup, muscovado sugar, and ginger paste in a heavy-based saucepan. Warm gently to melt the butter. Stir continuously, and do not let it boil. Let cool a little.
5. Beat the eggs and milk together, and then add them to the warm mixture.
6. Sift together the flour, baking soda, baking powder, ground ginger, mixed spice, paprika, and salt. Mix into the liquid, and stir well to ensure that there are absolutely no lumps. Pour the mixture into the prepared pan.
7. Bake for 35–45 minutes. The top will become a lovely dark, rich color. Insert a skewer into the center of the cake; it will come out completely clean when the cake is cooked.
8. As soon as the cake comes out of the oven, glaze it with the remaining 3 tablespoons/50 ml golden syrup, and place the fine slivers of stem ginger all over the top of the cake.
9. Let cool before removing from the pan.
10. When completely cool, store cake in an airtight container, and leave to mature for several days before eating.
11. Keeps for up to 2 weeks.

*\*Stem ginger in syrup is available online from British markets.*

*†Golden syrup, a popular sweetener in England, is available in some supermarkets and many gourmet markets.*

*‡A type of partially refined to unrefined brown sugar, muscovado is distinguishable by its deep-brown color and strong molasses flavor.*

*‡‡Mixed spice, similar to pumpkin-pie spice, is a British blend that includes equal parts cinnamon, nutmeg, and all-spice, with lesser portions of mace, cloves, coriander, and ginger.*