

#1 NEW YORK TIMES  
BESTSELLING AUTHOR

# NORA ROBERTS



## *Table for Two*

Two tempting classics  
from the master of romance!



# NORA ROBERTS

## *Table for Two*



*Silhouette® Books*

Published by Silhouette Books

**America's Publisher of Contemporary Romance**

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SILHOUETTE BOOKS



## TABLE FOR TWO

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### SUMMER DESSERTS

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### LESSONS LEARNED

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**Printed in U.S.A.**

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**Praise for #1 *New York Times* bestselling author  
NORA ROBERTS:**

"Roberts has a warm feel for her characters  
and an eye for the evocative detail."

—*Chicago Tribune*

"Roberts nails her characters and setting with awesome  
precision, drawing readers into a vividly rendered world  
of family-centered warmth and unquestioned magic."

—*Library Journal*

"A consistently entertaining writer."

—*USA TODAY*

"Roberts' style has a fresh, contemporary snap."

—*Kirkus Reviews*

"Roberts is indeed a word artist, painting her story and  
her characters with vitality and verve."

—*Los Angeles Daily News*

"The publishing world might be hard-pressed  
to find an author with a more diverse style  
or fertile imagination than Roberts."

—*Publishers Weekly*

"Her stories have fueled the dreams  
of twenty-five million readers."

—*Entertainment Weekly*

"Nora Roberts just keeps getting better and better."

—*Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*

"Nora Roberts' gift...is her ability to pull the reader  
into the lives of her characters—we live,  
love, anguish and triumph with them."

—*Rendezvous*

"Nora Roberts has been called 'a born storyteller'  
and she lives up to that reputation."

—*Inside Books*

"Roberts...is at the top of her game."

—*People magazine*

Dear Reader,

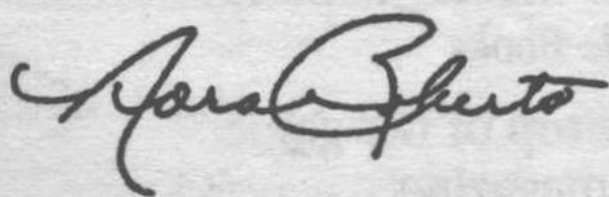
I'm delighted you've decided to join me at this *Table for Two*, a special 2-in-1 volume containing two of my classic romances, *Summer Desserts* and *Lessons Learned*, which were originally published in the Silhouette Special Edition line.

You know the old saying about the way to a man's heart? Well, *Summer Desserts* features Summer Lyndon, a gifted dessert chef who is at the top of her game. Which should have made it easy for Summer to turn down hotel tycoon Blake Cocharan's demand that she work for him. There was just no reason for her to have to accept a client as arrogant and downright infuriating as Blake. But Blake also offers a challenge. And Summer isn't the type of woman to turn down a challenge. Especially one from such an irresistibly handsome man.

*Lessons Learned* features Summer's old friend and fellow chef, Carlo Franconi. Carlo is not only the master of all things culinary, but he is also quite the ladies' man. Except when it comes to one particular lady. Julie Trent is Carlo's publicist, and though he finds her fascinating, she has a rule about not combining business with pleasure. But this passionate Italian lover is all about pleasure, and he's about to show Julie that some rules are meant to be broken.

I hope you enjoy these two stories!

All the best,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Nora Roberts". The signature is fluid and elegant, with a large, stylized initial 'N' and 'R'.



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## A romantic dessert recipe from Nora Roberts!

### CREAM PUFFS

#### Pastry Shells:

*1 cup water*

*1/2 cup butter or margarine*

*1 cup flour*

*4 eggs*

Heat water and butter to rolling boil, then stir in the flour. Over low heat, stir vigorously for about a minute. Mixture will form into a ball.

Remove from heat.

Beat in eggs, all at once, until smooth.

Drop dough by 1/4 cupfuls, three inches apart, on ungreased baking sheet for standard size pastries. Bake at 400°F for 35 to 40 minutes, until puffed and golden.

For mini cream puffs, use slightly rounded tablespoons for dough and bake for 25 to 30 minutes.

Standard size yields about a dozen, minis about 5 dozen.

Cool, then cut off tops. Pull out any filaments of dough.

#### Vanilla Cream Pudding:

*1/3 cup sugar*

*2 tbsp cornstarch*

*1/8 tsp salt*

*2 cups milk*

*2 egg yolks, slightly beaten*

*2 tbsp butter or margarine, softened*

*2 tsp vanilla*

Blend sugar, cornstarch and salt in 2-quart saucepan.

Combine milk and eggs, then gradually stir into sugar mixture. Cook over medium heat, stirring constantly, until the mixture thickens and boils. Stir and boil about a minute, then remove from heat. Stir in butter and vanilla.

Spoon vanilla cream pudding into pastry shells. Replace tops. Dust with confectioners' sugar and refrigerate until served.

To save time, you can replace Vanilla Cream Pudding with vanilla instant pudding (3 1/2 oz size), with one cup of milk blended by mixer on slow speed, for about two minutes. Add 2 cups whipping cream and beat another two minutes on medium speed until soft peaks form.



# SUMMER DESSERTS

To Marianne Shock,  
for the cheerful and clever last-minute help.



## *Chapter 1*

Her name was Summer. It was a name that conjured visions of hot petaled flowers, sudden storms and long, restless nights. It also brought images of sun-warmed meadows and naps in the shade. It suited her.

As she stood, hands poised, body tensed, eyes alert, there wasn't a sound in the room. No one, absolutely no one, took their eyes off her. She might move slowly, but there wasn't a person there who wanted to chance missing a gesture, a motion. All attention, all concentration, was riveted upon that one slim, solitary figure. Strains of Chopin floated romantically through the air. The light slanted and shot through her neatly bound hair—rich, warm brown with hints and tints of gold. Two emerald studs winked at her ears.

Her skin was a bit flushed so that a rose tinge accented already prominent cheekbones and the elegant bone structure that comes only from breeding. Excite-

ment, intense concentration, deepened the amber flecks that were sprinkled in the hazel of her eyes. The same excitement and concentration had her soft, molded lips forming a pout.

She was all in white, plain, unadorned white, but she drew the eye as irresistibly as a butterfly in full, dazzling flight. She wouldn't speak, yet everyone in the room strained forward as if to catch the slightest sound.

The room was warm, the smells exotic, the atmosphere taut with anticipation.

Summer might have been alone for all the attention she paid to those around her. There was only one goal, one end. Perfection. She'd never settled for less.

With infinite care she lifted the final diamond-shape and pressed the angelica onto the Savarin to complete the design she'd created. The hours she'd already spent preparing and baking the huge, elaborate dessert were forgotten, as was the heat, the tired leg muscles, the aching arms. The final touch, the *appearance* of a Summer Lyndon creation, was of the utmost importance. Yes, it would taste perfect, smell perfect, even slice perfectly. But if it didn't look perfect, none of that mattered.

With the care of an artist completing a masterpiece, she lifted her brush to give the fruits and almonds a light, delicate coating of apricot glaze.

Still, no one spoke.

Asking no assistance—indeed, she wouldn't have tolerated any—Summer began to fill the center of the Savarin with the rich cream whose recipe she guarded jealously.

Hands steady, head erect, Summer stepped back to



give her creation one last critical study. This was the ultimate test, for her eye was keener than any other's when it came to her own work. She folded her arms across her body. Her face was without expression. In the huge kitchen, the ping of a pin dropped on the tile would have reverberated like a gunshot.

Slowly her lips curved, her eyes glittered. Success. Summer lifted one arm and gestured rather dramatically. "Take it away," she ordered.

As two assistants began to roll the glittering concoction from the room, applause broke out.

Summer accepted the accolade as her due. There was a place for modesty, she knew, and she knew it didn't apply to her Savarin. It was, to put it mildly, magnificent. Magnificence was what the Italian duke had wanted for his daughter's engagement party, and magnificence was what he'd paid for. Summer had simply delivered.

"Mademoiselle." Foulfount, the Frenchman whose specialty was shellfish took Summer by both shoulders. His eyes were round and damp with appreciation. "*Incroyable.*" Enthusiastically, he kissed both her cheeks while his thick, clever fingers squeezed her skin as they might a fresh-baked loaf of bread. Summer broke out in her first grin in hours.

"*Merci.*" Someone had opened a celebratory bottle of wine. Summer took two glasses, handing one to the French chef. "To the next time we work together, *mon ami.*"

She tossed back the wine, took off her chef's hat, then breezed out of the kitchen. In the enormous marble-floored, chandeliered dining room, her Savarin was even now being served and admired. Her last thought

before leaving was—thank God someone else had to clean up the mess.

Two hours later, she had her shoes off and her eyes closed. A gruesome murder mystery lay open on her lap as her plane cruised over the Atlantic. She was going home. She'd spent almost three full days in Milan for the sole purpose of creating that one dish. It wasn't an unusual experience for her. Summer had baked *Charlotte Malakoff* in Madrid, flamed *Crêpes Fourée* in Athens and molded *Île Flottante* in Istanbul. For her expenses, and a stunning fee, Summer Lyndon would create a dessert that would live in the memory long after the last bite, drop or crumb was consumed.

Have wisk, will travel, she thought vaguely and smiled through a yawn.

She considered herself a specialist, not unlike a skilled surgeon. Indeed, she'd studied, apprenticed and practiced as long as many respected members of the medical profession. Five years after passing the stringent requirements to become a cordon bleu chef in Paris, the city where cooking is its own art, Summer had a reputation for being as temperamental as any artist, for having the mind of a computer when it came to remembering recipes and for having the hands of an angel.

Summer half dozed in her first-class seat and fought off a desperate craving for a slice of pepperoni pizza.

She knew the flight time would go faster if she could read or sleep her way through it. She decided to mix the two, taking the light nap first. Summer was a woman who prized her sleep almost as highly as she prized her recipe for chocolate mousse.



On her return to Philadelphia, her schedule would be hectic at best. There was the bombe to prepare for the governor's charity banquet, the annual meeting of the Gourmet Society, the demonstration she'd agreed to do for public television...and that meeting, she remembered drowsily.

What had that bird-voiced woman said over the phone? Summer wondered. Drake—no, Blake—Cocharan. Blake Cocharan, III of the Cocharan hotel chain. Excellent hotels, Summer thought without any real interest. She'd patronized a number of them in various corners of the world. Mr. Cocharan the Third had a business proposition for her.

Summer assumed that he wanted her to create some special dessert exclusively for his chain of hotels, something they could attach the Cocharan name to. She wasn't averse to the notion—under the proper circumstances. And for the proper fee. Naturally she'd have to investigate the entire Cocharan enterprise carefully before she agreed to involve her skill or her name with it. If any one of their hotels was of inferior quality...

With a yawn, Summer decided to think about it later—after she'd met with The Third personality. Blake Cocharan, III, she thought again with a sleepily amused smile. Plump, balding, probably dyspeptic. Italian shoes, Swiss watch, French shirts, German car—and no doubt he'd consider himself unflaggingly American. The image she created hung in her mind a moment, and bored with it, she yawned again—then sighed as the idea of pizza once again invaded her thoughts. Summer tilted her seat back farther and determinedly willed herself to sleep.