



Harvest Moon (A Virgin River Novel Book 15)

By Robyn Carr

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Return to Virgin River with the books that started it all...

The recipe for happiness: making it up as you go along

Rising sous-chef Kelly Matlock's sudden collapse at work is a wake-up call. Disillusioned and burned out, she's retreated to her sister Jillian's house in Virgin River to rest and reevaluate.

Puttering in Jill's garden and cooking with her heirloom vegetables is wonderful, but Virgin River is a far cry from San Francisco. Kelly's starting to feel a little too unmotivated...until she meets Lief Holbrook. The handsome widower looks more like a lumberjack than a sophisticated screenwriter—a combination Kelly finds irresistible. But less appealing is Lief's rebellious stepdaughter, Courtney. She's the reason they moved from LA, but Courtney's finding plenty of trouble even in Virgin River.

Kelly's never fallen for a guy with such serious baggage, but some things are worth fighting for. Besides, a bratty teenager can't be any worse than a histrionic chef...right?

Look for *What We Find* by Robyn Carr, a powerful story of healing, new beginnings and one woman's journey to finding the happiness she's long been missing. Order your copy today!

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Harvest Moon (A Virgin River Novel Book 15) By Robyn Carr Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #24281 in eBooks
- Published on: 2016-01-01
- Released on: 2015-12-29
- Format: Kindle eBook

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Editorial Review

Review

"A touching romance that adds another chapter to Carr's engaging series that hovers at the borders of women's fiction and romance and is sure to appeal to fans of both." -Library Journal on A New Hope

"Carr fills her seventh visit to Thunder Point with a charming cast of characters and a tender love story."

-Publishers Weekly on One Wish

"The captivating sixth installment of Carr's Thunder Point series...brings up big emotions."

-Publishers Weekly on The Homecoming

"In Carr's very capable hands, the Thunder Point saga continues to delight."

-RT Book Reviews on The Promise

"Sexy, funny, and intensely touching."

-Library Journal on The Chance

"A touch of danger and suspense make the latest in Carr's Thunder Point series a powerful read."

-RT Book Reviews on The Hero

"With her trademark mixture of humor, realistic conflict, and razor-sharp insights, Carr brings Thunder Point to vivid life."

-Library Journal on The Newcomer

"No one can do small-town life like Carr."

-RT Book Reviews on The Wanderer

"Carr has hit her stride with this captivating series."

-Library Journal on the Virgin River series

About the Author

Robyn Carr is a RITA® Award-winning, #1 *New York Times* bestselling author of more than forty novels, including the critically acclaimed Virgin River series. Robyn and her husband live in Las Vegas, Nevada. You can visit Robyn Carr's website at www.RobynCarr.com.

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"I need to see you," Phillip said. "My office." Kelly Matlock, sous chef, threw him an incredulous look. She

was literally holding apart a big Italian and a big Swede; the Italian line cook had a spatula and the Swedish one was wielding a metal spoon as they fought over stove-top territory. The request that she go to the restaurant manager's office right now was so absurd, she almost laughed. "Really too busy here, Phillip," she said. "Not only are we having a brawl in the kitchen, but it's seven o'clock. Prime dinner rush. Check with me at ten."

"It's urgent," he said. "Otherwise, believe me, I wouldn't ask."

"Where's Durant?" Kelly asked, speaking of the chef de cuisine, the head chef.

"Making his rounds in the front of the house, gloating. Let these two morons kill each other—we're short on meat anyway."

That suggestion did far more to separate the line cooks than Kelly had. "I'll be right there," she said to Phillip. He liked to be addressed as *Philippe*, although Kelly had learned he didn't actually have a French cell in his body. His accent was entirely for show. She went to her locker, removed her apron and exchanged her soiled white jacket for a clean, crisp one and left her senior line cook in charge.

It never crossed her mind that it might be a real emergency; Phillip loved his melodramatic displays. His second favorite thing was making passes at the female staff and his third, screaming matches with Durant.

One day, when Kelly finally became chef de cuisine, there would be no Phillip; she would never tolerate a manager with such annoying, socially unacceptable behaviors.

She gave a couple of taps on Phillip's office door and then pushed it open. Her heart almost stopped. Seated there, in a chair facing the restaurant manager's desk, was Olivia Brazzi, wife of the world-famous master chef Luciano Brazzi. Although Kelly crossed her path regularly—at charity events and in this very restaurant—they didn't know each other at all. Luca owned a controlling interest in this restaurant. Olivia was tight with Durant and her presence here was not unusual. But Olivia had always ignored Kelly, treating her as if she were a mere cook, not worthy of her time.

Olivia smiled at her with such warmth and kindness, Kelly wondered for an insane moment if she were dreaming and Olivia had come to turn Luca over to her.

While Mrs. Brazzi was stunning in her elegant black crepe dress, shiny textured stockings, three-inch heels and strategically placed diamonds, she did not look her fifty years, not by twenty. She looked like a girl. A sophisticated girl with ice-blue eyes.

Kelly's stomach flipped. *What in the world could she want with me?* she thought. *Could she expect me to cater a special dinner party or event?*

Olivia glanced at Phillip. "A moment, Philippe? May I have the room?"

Kelly became light-headed. On her list of most unexpected events, a private meeting with Olivia Brazzi was up there with alien abduction.

"Of course, Olivia," he said and paused to kiss the back of her hand before leaving. It made Kelly want to gag.

"Ms. Matlock, please," Olivia purred. "Sit down a moment." She gestured with a small, delicate hand to the chair beside her.

Kelly said a brief prayer. *Whatever this is, please let it be over quickly!*

"I'm sorry that our first meeting is so awkward, Ms. Matlock, but I've come to ask you to stop sleeping with my husband."

Kelly's eyes grew large in spite of her desire to remain poised. "Are you serious?" she asked, mortified.

"Oh, my, yes," Olivia said.

"Mrs. Brazzi, I'm *not* sleeping with Luca!"

"Perhaps there's not that much sleeping... Now, let's get it sorted out quickly and quietly. Shall we?" And she lifted a brow.

Whew, at least Olivia was quick and to the point. And that sounded suspiciously as if Olivia and Luca were not as separated as Luca claimed.

Of course, Kelly *wasn't* sleeping with him! But best to say nothing further, she decided, because her feelings for Luca would probably show all over her face. She swallowed those emotions with an effort.

Kelly was pretty; she knew she was pretty. But Olivia was *beautiful*. And chic. And seasoned; experienced. Her sophisticated and contained self-assuredness was a bit overpowering. Kelly had been up against the most diabolical chefs in the world, yet the soft spoken Mrs. Brazzi had her completely intimidated.

"Luca told me everything. How you met, how long you've been seeing each other, etcetera. It's a familiar story. Of course you're not the first," Olivia said. "I imagine you know that by now. My husband seems to have a particular taste for blondes. Please, will you break it off?"

She knew she shouldn't say anything *at all*. But this was a bit too crazy to leave alone. "With all due respect, Mrs. Brazzi, I don't know what you're talking about."

"Your affair with Luca has been going on for about three months now. Maybe four? You met at a charity event—in fact, I was present. You love to exchange food. It leads to all the other things—for Luca, food equals passion. Your number was all over his cell phone, so I confronted him. It's not the first time we've gone around about something like that. The messages, the texts, the pictures, all that. Please, it's out now. I just want it to end."

Kelly stiffened. "Really, Mrs. Brazzi, I've known your husband much longer than three months. I've been sous chef here for three years! We've had professional contact, sometimes frequent—*this is* his restaurant, even if Durant thinks he owns the place, but—"

Olivia smiled indulgently. "Please, do call me Olivia. After all, we have so much in common. And my dear, you really don't want to pursue this. If it's not already obvious to you, allow me to enlighten you—Luca has a short attention span. Has he told you about the other children? The ones he's fathered outside our marriage?"

If her intention was to shock Kelly, it certainly worked. "Ah, Mrs. Brazzi, you have me at a complete

disadvantage. This is sounding more and more like personal business between you and your husband. I wouldn't know anything about—"

"We've managed to keep those unfortunate liaisons inside the family and company, but if you're really close he would have told you. Luca has many conquests on his record. For all I know, there could be a dozen children. But not on the books—I keep a close eye on the finances. I'm sorry if you're hurt, but the sooner you move away from this mess with Luca, the better, I promise you. It won't come to a tidy end. And there's no money in it."

Kelly shot to her feet. "Money? You can't possibly think—" And then she could have kicked herself. How's that for sounding like a confession? But the suggestion that she was a gold digger was somehow even more offensive than the accusation that she was fooling around with Luca!

"I'm truly sorry," Olivia said. "I meant no offense. I'm sure you probably love him madly. You should know that while Luca supports his children, their mothers haven't profited. They're forced to live simply. And sadly, my children haven't been welcoming to them. As you might imagine, it doesn't please them that their father has such a wandering eye. They're very loyal to me."

"Mrs. Brazzi, I wouldn't know about things like children outside your marriage because I don't believe I'm a confidante. I speak to Luca about recipes and menus, about dining venues and career opportunities. He's been a mentor and friend. But really—"

"Just save it, Ms. Matlock. I couldn't possibly have stayed with Luca this long by being naïve. You call or text him several times a day!"

"Those are replies," Kelly insisted. It was the truth—if there were several texts or calls in a day, it was because she was answering him. She never initiated *many* calls; she didn't want to appear needy or desperate. "I wouldn't want to bother him! He's a very busy man!"

Olivia leaned closer. "I've seen the records, dear. I know you're in love with my husband and we have to end this here. Now."

Fair enough, Kelly thought. The relationship, such as it was, would hereby end. But she bristled at the way she was being misjudged, as if *she* had gone after *him*, perhaps for profit. Luca had told her that he and Olivia lived separate lives under the same roof, that for over twenty years they'd had separate bedrooms, that they were together for their children and important social events that led to business success. Kelly had *never* been his lover!

All that being said, Kelly had long ago admitted to herself that her relationship with him wasn't completely innocent. Luca romanced her with food and words, claimed to have fallen for her, professed to love her. And although she had said she wasn't getting involved with a married man, she'd lapped up his praise and adoration like a thirsty puppy.

Still, she couldn't imagine what Olivia Brazzi had seen that would lead her to assume some sexual liaison!

Kelly could play along with this until she spoke to Luca and found out what was going on. "Seriously, Mrs. Brazzi, I would never disrupt your family. Luca should have saved you the trouble of coming here. In fact, if he said it would be best to have no friendship at all, I would understand. I'm not holding him hostage."

But what Mrs. Brazzi had said—preference for blondes, many conquests, children born outside his marriage? None of this reflected anything Luca had told her.

Of *course*, she chided herself. Big surprise.

Olivia actually laughed. "Who do you think sent me, darling? It's not the first time I've had to clean up after him."

"Are you out of your mind?" Kelly nearly shouted before she could stop herself.

"I know rudeness runs rampant in the kitchen." Olivia frowned. "Believe me, I've witnessed that for myself on many occasions, but it's not charming. Yes, Luca sent me to talk to you. He thought that coming from me, you would understand."

"That's the thing I *don't* understand. Why would he do this to me? I'm certainly no threat to you." She shook her head. "He had only to tell me that you were uncomfortable with our friendship, and that would end all communication between us."

"Nice try, darling," Olivia said. "While he was in the lavatory last night, I looked at his phone. I found a couple of weeks' worth of recent calls, a couple of very sultry voice mails from you, some texts he hadn't deleted. We fought. We negotiated. He made me an offer—if I would ask you to kindly move on, he would stop taking your calls and instruct his staff to make polite excuses. I agreed. As I have before. Can we consider this over now?"

Kelly frowned. Then she really laughed. Sultry? Not likely. "Mrs. Brazzi, you've got the wrong girl. I can't imagine I've ever left him a sultry message!" And the Luca Kelly knew was more likely to explode in anger than whimper a confession and beg for help from his estranged wife to end a relationship over what might've been on his cell phone! Kelly was paranoid and nervous enough to never leave a suggestive text or voice mail. She couldn't count the number of assistants Luca employed.

She had believed Luca, that he and his wife had an understanding and their legal separation and divorce was being negotiated. There was an occasional text: I'll be in the restaurant office at five. I want to see you. Couldn't he be sending that sort of text to any chef he wanted to speak to? Any colleague? To Durant? To Phillip?

Was it possible Olivia was a little nuts? Was she exaggerating, or was it possible she was a little crazy?

Frankly, it surprised Kelly that Luca was still around. Most men with the good looks, money and power of Luca Brazzi would move on to a woman more willing to throw caution to the wind and succumb to that fullblown affair Olivia apparently thought they had had.

It was irrelevant that Kelly longed for that; it was beside the point that Kelly adored him, that she believed herself to be in love with him. She'd managed to keep him at a safe distance because he was married. And...because she was woefully inexperienced with men.

"I think you need to work this out with Luciano," Kelly said, shaking her head. "I'm not sure what's really going on here."

"If that's the case, dear, then you won't be at all upset when you can't reach him."

"Mrs. Brazzi, if he's such a philanderer and cheat, having children with mistresses and spoiling your good name, why in the world are *you* with him?"

"That's a fair question. Because we married for life, we have a very large family together, we're business partners and breaking up an international company as large as ours would be dreadfully complicated. And you may rest assured, my name is on every document that matters. All that aside, despite his flaws, I do love the man. He's a genius, a gifted and complicated man, and he couldn't manage without someone like me. He has a habit of telling his women that there's nothing between us, but of course it's not true—we sleep together every night. We're husband and wife, dear. Now, here's what will happen," she explained. "He has given his word he won't contact you again. The romance dissolves here and now and you're on your way to the next available man. Thank you for your time."

She turned, and before Kelly could even speak, Olivia's hand was on the office door to leave.

Kelly lost her head and blurted out her feelings before she could stop herself. "I can't imagine running off alleged girlfriends for a man I loved! Why do you do it?"

Olivia turned toward her. She smiled patiently. "Trust me, I have my reasons. Billions of reasons, really. Good evening, Ms. Matlock."

Kelly went back to the kitchen, which was hot, steamy and alive with action, shouting and chaos typical of seven-thirty in the evening. In something of a daze, she quickly replaced the perfectly white, starched coat with her slightly soiled one and wrapped her apron around her waist. Of course Luca could have lied to her; perhaps he was just trying to consummate the very fling Olivia suspected.

Or, Olivia could be lying about Luca sending her to ask Kelly to go away, for a billion reasons.

She wasn't going to find out soon, so she got back in there and started directing traffic, checking the orders, moving dishes along to the waitstaff, observing the line cooks at work, stepping in whenever her assistance was needed.

Users Review

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Robert Vargas:

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