

Robert Lambert



Greetings!

A busy season for me always, and then I come up with new products in the middle of it, throwing caution, and my sanity, to the wind! The hottest is the Hot Ginger Caramel Sauce, the most favorable launch of a new product I think I've ever had. It's not too hot, more that I liked the name, though there is plenty of ginger. I use the same spice profile as my White Ginger Syrup, so those of you who are fans of that will know where I'm going here.



Hot Ginger Caramel Sauce

N'ery a product on the market has this flavor combo, but I predict a slew of them by spring: it's a match made in heaven! Try it with apples or pears, drizzled over a tart, on baked squash with sea salt and black pepper, or on vanilla ice cream with chopped toasted almonds-my favorite, and the only dessert I've served since coming up with this new temptation a month ago.

New Fig Jam

Farmer's Market regulars have also been recently treated to my new Fig Jam. The figs are from my old friend Frank, a photographer who produced many of my web site photos and has a house in a historic area near downtown Napa. It's his neighbor who has the storied white grapefruit tree I use for my 5 Grapefruit Marmalade-I've harvested as much as 400 lbs. of fruit from that phenomenal tree in a day.

Frank has 2 trees in his back yard that I blend, a Black Mission Fig and a Brown Turkey Fig (they're large and curve to one side, taking the shape of a Tom with his tail fanned.) They're maybe 80 years old and yield a good amount of fruit, but not all at once so it takes repeated visits. The drive through wine country is one of the most beautiful in the world, and it's nice to have a chance to catch up as I fill my boxes, so no complaints!



Organic Local Figs

Figs are extremely alkaline, so much so that I must wear latex gloves to pick them or risk burns from their milky stem sap. This causes a certain flatness in their flavor even when ripe and sweet, so I've blended them with Meyer lemon zest and juice, a bit of my raspberry jelly, plenty of exquisite cognac and an infusion of the osmanthus blossom, a rare



Frank's Figs

aromatic from tropical China. There're plenty of chunks of fig in this gorgeous rose-colored jam, as good on toast as it is with cheese, or even glazing a pork chop!

Savoring the Seasons

It has long been a special treat for me when I manage to save a fruitcake from one year to another, sometimes several years, and am able to enjoy not only the dense texture and lengthening depth of flavor that ripened butter and mellowed aged citrus peels impart, but the magic of the preserving powers of sugar and heat and alcohol that allow me to enjoy it years after it was created.

In recent years I've been selling out consistently over the holidays, but last season I managed to save a few dozen White Fruitcakes to begin an aging process, and I'm offering vintage cakes for the first time. Limited quantity. At least 14 months old.

Celebrating Family

Speaking of the well-aged, a special celebratory nod to my Dad this month, celebrating his 90th birthday, in good health! A man of wide ranging interests and abilities, it is he I turn to when I need something thought-out, solved or invented to help me do my work. He designed and built my syrup bottle filler and most recently a large fine-mesh screen pan for seeding raspberries. Next is a device for storing, drying and depositing jar rims. But it was during my visit to the farm in July that I was able to orchestrate our biggest collaboration ever.

When Dad and my brother rebuilt the back porch at the farm in the '70's there was no way to duplicate the woodwork in the rest of the house.

They tacked up a plain white trim. Ten years later a 1908 school in town came down, and my brother salvaged hundreds of feet of pure heart yellow pine woodwork, not a single knot. It lay in our barn for another 25 years.

This summer I was determined to finish the job, not knowing how much longer we could depend on our Master Carpenter. I measured everything, did drawings to scale, logged every piece of wood, its profile, width and length. Then I set about determining if there would be enough, and how to use each type to make it work. It did-with enough left for 2 mistakes, which of course we made! An enormous mitered jigsaw puzzle from one end to the other, but we did it, and neither of us could have done it without the other.



Home Porch

I hope you all take time to cherish your food, those who provide it and those who

prepare it. My plans include a thin cold slice of fruitcake, a strong hot cup of tea and a fire to stoke my memories. Happy Holidays!

My Best to you all---

Sincerely,

Robert Lambert
San Rafael, California
December 2010

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