

## Taking care of your Robert Lambert fruitcake



You've paid a premium price for one of my cakes and it's been delivered, but now what? No subject prompts more questions from customers than how to care for your Robert Lambert fruitcake. How to store it? Age it? Serve it?

To begin with, whether you eat it now or want to save it, keep all original packaging intact, but put it in a second zip top bag, and refrigerate it. Cellophane breathes slightly, like wrapping cheese in waxed paper, a permeable barrier that nevertheless needs a second stronger one to keep off flavors from penetrating and keep in moisture.

Secondly, left to their own devices, these cakes are fairly indestructible. Properly handled, they will last for years. While the label says keep refrigerated, and they should be, a few days or even weeks without it will do no real harm. Grandmother kept hers in the big stoneware crock in the cellarway, a cool dark place. For us it's the fridge. This is for long-term viability, but also to keep the cake firm enough to cut properly.

To cut, slide the cake out of its bag, cut the string at one end and peel back the cheesecloth. To cut through all the nuts and fruits, a sharp serrated bread knife is the best choice. Cut the slices as thin as you can. I try for about an eighth of an inch, shaved like cheese, so "the flavor has nowhere to hide." To store, pull the cheesecloth back over the end, slide it back in the cellophane bag, then in the zip top bag.

Alcohol levels are, I've found, subject to personal taste, but I don't believe in dousing these cakes repeatedly with booze. I keep and age all cakes in their original parchment pan liners. I add no liquor until I wrap them, and I don't wrap them until they're ready to be sold. The amount is tightly controlled, 3 tablespoons total on each cake and cheesecloth. This flavors the cakes, but also acts as a disinfecting barrier that keeps the cake from drying out.

If you are aging one yourself, and the original dousing evaporates over time, you may want to douse the cheesecloth with more alcohol before you serve it. A couple tablespoons at most, Cognac for the White and Winter, whiskey for the Dark. Let it soak in for a few days before you cut it. Hope this answers all your questions!

My Best to you,  
Robert Lambert