

Robert Lambert



Greetings!

I've already had a late March visit with family at the farm in Wisconsin, snow was gone but ice still on the lakes. It was good to get into the woods, and back to the house! Marshmallows toasted in the fireplace. Popcorn and cards. Pot roast and pie. Read till you fall asleep. My treat was to bring a good supply of mandarins that I'd just picked at Gene Lester's, and it seemed every time I turned around someone was peeling one.

Also time for the grim annual survey of what trees, vines, shrubs and flowers were done in by what deer/rabbit/weasel/woodchuck/mouse. Though it was still quite cold I was greeted with a mass of blooming crocus, naturalized from ones grandmother planted over 60 years ago. The next morning it was 10 degrees and they were flat as wet tissues, but in a few days it warmed again and they regained their perky enthusiasm. How do they do it!



Click on birch tree for photo gallery

New Products

My web site has just been updated, some products dropped and others added. Through Farmer's Market friends I've found superb fruit that has led me down new paths.

A raspberry grower picks out overripe fruit as the baskets are filled for market; they'll go bad before they're sold. These he saves and sells to me, only the darkest, most flavorful berries. I then spend many hours pressing them through fine mesh sieves by hand, the only way to remove all the pulp and leave nothing behind but seeds. I combine the juice and pulp with less than an equal amount of sugar and infuse this with my favorite champagne-scented geranium, rose geranium and a bit of fresh lime juice.

The resulting [Raspberry Champagne Jelly](#) is more a velvety seedless jam than a jelly. Cooking this takes me back to my most treasured food memory, picking wild raspberries at the farm with my grandmother and helping to make the jam we would eat all winter on my mother's toasted white bread.

Vibrant, bright, perfumed, this is the true essence of the fruit, as a woman at the market said last week, "OH!! It's so...raspberry!!! Exactly.



Another new offering now available is [Strawberry Rhubarb Jam](#). As a child in Wisconsin, rhubarb sauce was the first thing I ever made by myself, the thick red stems brought home on my bike from Uncle Charlie's a block away. Rhubarb is a challenge to grow in coastal California, but I now have a Market source from the Sierra foothills where it's cold enough to thrive. This I blend with the tiny delicate organic strawberries whose scent tempts me from across the aisle at

Strawberry Rhubarb Jam my Saturday market in Oakland, from Ledesma Family Farms. The two are cooked with less sugar than fruit and a lemon-scented geranium for a bright citrus note.

Finally I have been able to add some products made with yuzu, the citrus fruit popular in Japan. While categorized as a lime, it's closer to grapefruit or lemon, but earthy and richly perfumed, in a class all its own. They're full of seeds and have little juice, the prize is the heady peel. Since plant quarantines prevent importing there is at present little domestic supply and enormous demand, pushing prices as high as \$20 a pound. By guaranteeing to purchase a grower's entire crop and pick them myself-very sharp thorns!-I was able to get a better price.

Most of these I blended with some Meyer lemon juice and the old variety of white grapefruit I harvest in Napa to make [Yuzu Syrup](#). It beautifully evokes the unique yuzu scent and is wonderful on fruit, in cocktails, tea or yogurt. The rest made a small amount of [Yuzu Marmalade](#). 45 pounds of fruit held 8 pounds of seeds, and 2 cutters worked most of a day to yield 4 batches. I will not make this again as it is impossible to price fairly, but it is superb. Get it while it lasts!

Many Happy Returns

Four years ago I ran out of [Kaffir Lime Syrup](#) when a big freeze killed the tender trees I depended on for fruit, but at last they are back. You may be familiar with this flavor from Thai food. Since this citrus is cultivated mostly for its aromatic leaves, the fruit

yield is small, its season short. Yet they are beautiful and intensely flavored, the juice sharp and bright. It takes a good deal of cooking to tame them, but worth the extra work. Use this syrup in cocktails or sparkling water, on fruit, sorbet, in rice pilaf, marinades, on seafood. You may even use this to flavor a Thai curry if you have no leaves!



Kaffir Limes

[Salt-Preserved Meyer Lemons](#) became my second-best selling product last year. Many market customers I talk with buy them initially for a Moroccan recipe, then find, as I have, that they are wonderful just about anywhere. Now it's time for my **Salt-Preserved Rangpur Limes** to share the spotlight. For many years I've had to scrounge for this fruit, staking out back yard trees to get what I needed even as I found more places to use this rare and unique sour mandarin.



Rangpur Limes in Salt

I have at last found a source with enough fruit for syrup, marmalade and to salt, so I'm able to promote this product at last. The recipe has been improved; to the bay leaf and juniper berry I've added sprigs of fresh blooming rosemary and English lavender. The result is a flavor surprisingly like saffron, and it has become my favorite seasoning in almost everything I cook, from seafood to soup to salads, on greens, grains, roasted peppers and olives or a pot of beans!

Another comeback story is the [Malted Milk Chocolate Sauce](#), which I had dropped but have returned by popular demand. Rich creamy milk chocolate is blended with some dark chocolate to cut the sweetness, then with malt flavoring and a bit of Jack Daniels bourbon. It's one of my favorites in my chocolate sauce line so I'm glad to have it back in the house as well.

It's great on ice cream, but I've always thought a good malt the ultimate indulgence. To schedule it once a year on my birthday is the only way I can exhibit control. I scoop most of a pint of Haagen Daz into a blender, add just a splash of milk and a few tablespoons of this. Thick as home-churned ice cream, it barely makes it up the straw. Bliss!!!

My Best to you all---

Sincerely,

Robert Lambert
San Rafael, California
May 2010

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