



**A NORTHERN CALIFORNIA WINE BOOTCAMP ADVENTURE:
FROM SEBASTOPOL TO ST. HELENA**

TREVOR FELCH, KQED, AUGUST 31, 2019



For history purposes, Larkmead deserves to be amongst the historic titans like Stag's Leap, Charles Krug and Chateau Montelena for the Napa Valley. However, Larkmead has managed to avoid the gaudy/corporate nature that has crept into almost all of the "famous" Napa Valley wineries, focusing on the wine itself being made in Calistoga on Larkmead Lane, where the Silverado Trail and Highway 29 are so close together you can almost start seeing one from the other.

Winemaker Dan Petroski has the magic Cabernet Sauvignon touch and manages to find the perfect middle ground of Napa styles over his dozen harvests: strong flavors, mildly rugged textures, and superb balance of tannins and ripeness that keeps the wines from being too dominant on the palate.



He's a bit fortunate, though, since Larkmead's 110-acre estate is some of the most notable land in Napa for its diverse soils that are usually found on the Napa hillsides, so the estate gets valley weather above ground and hillside character below ground. He's working with some of the best terroir in one of the world's definitive wine growing regions. Indeed, several of the wines prove that combination can translate with gusto to the finished product.

Somehow, Petroski (a Brooklyn-born, former Manhattan publishing industry worker) still has time for his Italian centric personal label, Massican, that has its own cult following. You won't get the chance to try that at Larkmead, but seek it out. Overall, Larkmead's Cabernet Sauvignons (and Tocai Friulano), history (dating back to 1895), gorgeous pastel paintings by co-owner Kate Solari-Baker) and beautiful valley floor vistas will keep you plenty entertained. The staff is particularly enlightening here, as well, and our host Deanna Basham even took John out into the vineyard at twilight to fully explain how vine grafting works.

3 wines to try: 2017 Lillie Sauvignon Blanc, 2015 Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon, 2015 Solari Cabernet Sauvignon

Also consider: Spottswoode, Young Inglewood, Davis Estates