



2017 & 2018 NAPA VALLEY IN DEPTH

ANTONIO GALLONI, JANUARY 10, 2020

Winemaker Dan Petroski turned out an absolutely stellar set of wines at Larkmead in both 2016 and 2017. The bottled 2016's capture every bit of potential I sensed in these wines when they were in barrel. Conditions in 2017 were far more challenging than they were in 2016. Yields are down a whopping 43% across the board, much of that caused by heat spikes in both June and July. Petroski added that cluster weights and berry sizes were both on the small side, and that sugars struggled to climb during the final phase of ripening because of the accumulated stress in the vines. Remarkably, the 2017's offer quite a bit of potential just the same. As a reminder, the LMV Salon is the Cabernet Franc-based wine, while Firebelle is built on a core of Merlot. The Dr. Olmo, Solari and The Lark Cabernets emerge from specific portions of the vineyard that have been defined according to soil type

VINTAGE	NAME	TASTING NOTES	SCORE
2018	Lillie	Larkmead's 2018 Sauvignon Blanc Lillie is rich, deep and powerful, with a real sense of phenolic intensity that amps up a whole range of green, grassy varietal notes. Lemon peel, sage, white pepper and green apple add freshness and vibrancy. This is such a pretty wine.	92
2018	Tocai Friulano	The 2018 Tocai Friulano is a very pretty and expressive wine. As always, the Tocai here is beautifully nuanced, with tons of orchard fruit and floral character. In 2018, the Tocai has a bit more textural depth, which adds to the wine's considerable appeal. Much of that is attributable to the character of this fruit, which emerges from a young, recently planted block.	92
2017	Cabernet Sauvignon	The 2017 Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley) is a real overachiever in its peer group. Wonderfully layered and vibrant, the 2017 is just magnificent. All the elements come together in a sublime, wonderfully nuanced Cabernet. Larkmead ultimately decided not to bottle their Dr. Olmo Cabernet and instead used that wine (which was fabulous from barrel) to improve this blend - which it most certainly did.	93
2017	Firebelle	The 2017 Firebelle, Larkmead's Merlot-based wine, is laced with sweet red cherry, spice, mint, cedar, tobacco and orange peel. Medium in body, silky and nicely lifted, the 2017 is decidedly understated for Larkmead. I would prefer to drink it over the next handful of years, give or take, because of its mid-weight structure.	92
2017	LMV Salon	Cabernet Franc, with its bright, high-toned aromatics, takes the lead in the 2017 LMV Salon. Sweet dried red cherry, mint, tobacco and wild flowers are all nicely lifted throughout. Supple and racy with tons of immediacy, the 2017 is already inviting, although it will develop more nuance with time in bottle. Even just a bit of air brings out an attractive fleshiness.	92+



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VINTAGE	NAME	TASTING NOTES	SCORE
2017	Solari	The 2017 Cabernet Sauvignon Solari is dark, fleshy and enveloping in feel. Black cherry, plum, tobacco, chocolate, licorice and grilled herbs add myriad shades of complexity, but searing tannins need time in bottle to soften. Pretty floral and savory notes develop in the course of time. The 2017 will reward readers who can wait.	94
2017	The Lark	The 2017 Cabernet Sauvignon The Lark is super-expressive in the glass. Savory and deep, yet also light on its feet, the 2017 has a lot going on. Black cherry, spice, tobacco, leather and cedar add the layers of aromatic nuance to this powerful, brooding Calistoga Cabernet Sauvignon.	94
2018	Cabernet Sauvignon	The 2018 Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley) emphasizes freshness and vibrancy, all in a mid-weight style that holds considerable appeal. Cedar, sweet tobacco, mint, dried cherry, and licorice are all very nicely articulated. The 2018 is another super-classic, absolutely delicious wine from Larkmead.	(90-93)
2018	Firebelle	Larkmead's Merlot-based Firebelle is super-expressive and also quite savory in style. Dried flowers, grilled herbs, mint, licorice and floral notes grace the 2018. Medium in body, classy and impeccably balanced, the 2018 has a lot to offer. The purity of the flavors is striking. In 2018, Firebelle is 75% Merlot and 25% Cabernet Sauvignon.	(90-93)
2018	LMV Salon	The 2018 LMV Salon is superb. The flavors are so vibrant today. Bright and pungent in the glass with terrific energy, the 2018 is incredibly appealing. Sweet red cherry, rose petal, mint, licorice, herbs and mocha all grace this wonderfully expressive and nuanced Cabernet Franc/Cabernet Sauvignon blend.	(91-94)
2018	Dr. Olmo	The 2018 Cabernet Sauvignon Dr. Olmo is bright, taut and super-expressive, in a way that melds together the natural richness of this site with the super-classic sense of structure that runs through the Larkmead wines today. Tightly wound and reticent, the 2018 is likely to require a number of years to be at its finest. Even so, the flavors are just striking.	(92-95)
2018	Solari	The 2018 Cabernet Sauvignon Solari is rich, ample and wonderfully expressive, with striking textural richness and density. Red cherry, red plum, cedar, tobacco, menthol, licorice and blood orange all open up in the glass. More than anything else, the Solari is a wine of textural depth and resonance. The 2018 is very promising; it is shaping up to be a real beauty.	(90-93)
2018	The Lark	The 2018 Cabernet Sauvignon The Lark is deep, powerful and rich, but also massively tannic in the early going. Today, the Lark is a bit monolithic. Once again, I am not sure it is the most complete wine in this range. Dark red plum, chocolate, mocha, spice, smoke, leather and cedar develop with a bit of air, but the Lark remains pretty hard to read.	(92-95)