

vinous

There is a lot to report on at Larkmead. For starters, the wines have been divided into two ranges. The first set of wines are being sold under the Larkmead Vineyards brand, with the classic white label, and draw from multiple parcels across the estate. The top three wines (Cabernet Sauvignon, Solari and The Lark) have been given new black labels and are marketed under the Larkmead brand. A Cabernet Sauvignon bottling is made under both ranges. Personally, I think the marketing and branding strategy needs a little help. The wines, though, are terrific.

Dan Petroski, one of Napa Valley's most talented winemakers, has done a terrific job coaxing the very best out of these sights. Sadly, the world has caught on to quality here and prices are way, way up. Proprietor Cam Baker could have been a bit more gentle with these increases, which are sure to shock the estate's long-time customers. As for the wines, there is not much to say except that Larkmead remains one of the most distinctive sites anywhere in California. The 2014s are the first wines made with the new internal division of parcels and, perhaps for that reason, show a bit more focus as well as finesse. Winemaker Dan Petroski describes 2014 as a vintage that had both longer hang time than usual and that ripened at lower sugars than are the norm here, with less heat at the end of the growing season. The bottled 2013s are as powerful and bombastic as they have always been.

From 2013 Napa Valley: Once Upon a Time in America... (October 2015) by Antonio Galloni

VINTAGE	NAME	TASTING NOTES	SCORE	DRINKING WINDOW	RELEASE PRICE
2013	The Lark	Larkmead's 2013 The Lark, 100% Cabernet Sauvignon from two parcels on the heart of the property, is a rich, dense and unctuous wine. Dark red and black fruit, smoke, licorice and dark spices are pushed forward. In this lineup, The Lark stands out for its exceptional purity, density and overall richness, all of which come through in a dark, brooding expression of Cabernet Sauvignon. The Lark emerges from a single block of Cabernet on bale loam.	97	2019-2033	\$350
2013	Solari	Massive and structured to the core, the 2013 Solari is another totally captivating wine from Larkmead. Lavender, blackberry jam, cassis, mint, new leather and smoke saturate the palate as this dramatic, full-bodied wine shows off its captivating personality and huge sense of structure. Today the tannins are searing an intense, but there is more than enough fruit to go the distance. I sincerely hope readers will have the discipline to forget about the 2013s for a good 7-10 years, and even that may not be enough.	97	2023-2038	\$175
2013	Cabernet Sauvignon (Black Label)	The 2013 Cabernet Sauvignon (black label) is utterly magnificent. Towering and statuesque, the 2013 deftly balances ripeness, intensity and freshness, with suave tannins (for a big wine) and fabulous overall balance. A host of sweet red plum, pomegranate, spice, white pepper, crushed rocks and rose petal add the final shades of nuance. The 2013 is the proverbial iron fist in a velvet glove. The black label Cabernet Sauvignon emerges from parcels in the center of the estate planted on Cortina gravel.	96	2023-2038	\$125
2013	LMV Salon	The 2013 LMV Salon is just as impressive from bottle as it was from barrel. The significant presence of Cabernet Franc gives the rich, deep Larkmead fruit an additional top register of brightness that is compelling. Sweet floral notes, spice, mocha, new leather and mint are some of the signatures in this vivid, exceptionally beautiful wine. This is another wine that will require patience, but the 2013 is a knock-out, there is no doubt about it. Winemaker Dan Petroski told me he plans to increase the Cabernet Franc in this bottling.	95	2020-2033	\$150
2013	Firebelle	Deep, ripe and powerful, the 2013 Firebelle shows the richness and ripeness of the year in spades. Black cherry, smoke, bittersweet chocolate, new leather and dark spices meld together in the glass. Today, the 2013 comes across as a bit heavy and roasted, with plenty of depth but less in the way of finesse. This is the only 2013 that is less impressive from bottle than it was from barrel.	91	2018-2028	\$150
2013	Cabernet Sauvignon (White Label)	A dark, powerful wine, the 2013 Cabernet Sauvignon (white label) hits the palate with masses of dark fruit, cedar, tobacco, savory herbs and leather. Today the tannins are a bit rustic, but the 2013 possesses remarkable density and the pedigree to age for many years. The distinctly ferrous, iron-infused and meaty notes are some of the key Larkmead signatures.	92	2023-2038	\$125

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VINTAGE	NAME	TASTING NOTES	SCORE	DRINKING WINDOW	RELEASE PRICE
2014	Lillie	The 2014 Lillie (100% Sauvignon Blanc) is wonderfully perfumed and nuanced, with much of the aromatics coming from the significant presence of the musque clone. Grapefruit, mint, white flowers and chamomile are some of the notes that are laced throughout. This is a classy white from Larkmead.	92	2016-2020	\$60
2014	The Lark	The 2014 The Lark is built to please all the senses. Powerful and layered, yet also quite reticent, the 2014 is going to need a number of years to fully blossom, but it is gorgeous. Pomegranate, blueberry jam and spices find support in beams of underlying tannin that give the wine much of its energy. Even with all of its intensity, the 2014 is a remarkably polished Lark.	(94-97)		\$350
2014	Solari	Larkmead's 2014 Solari is striking. Unctuous, deep and exquisitely layered, the 2014 possesses magnificent balance and tons of pure pedigree. Sweet floral and spice notes meld into a core of expressive dark fruit. Today, the 2014 comes across as more delicate and polished than the 2013 tasted alongside it, with significant potential for the future.	(93-96)		\$175
2014	Cabernet Sauvignon (Black Label)	The 2014 Cabernet Sauvignon (black label) is dark and virile. Dark and explosive from the outset, the 2014 appears to be built for the long haul, as the tannins are imposing. Still, the wine's overall energy and intensity are impressive. It will be interesting to see how things develop over the coming years.	(92-95)		\$125
2014	LMV Salon	Larkmead's 2014 LMV Salon is sweet, nuanced and totally sexy. Pliant and super-expressive, even at this early stage, the 2014 is shaping up to be a beauty. Today, the fruit is quite primary, with plenty of sweet red cherry and plum nuances to match its supple personality.	(93-96)		\$150
2014	Firebelle	A precise, aromatically lifted wine, the 2014 Firebelle boasts striking finesse and overall delineation. Hints of lavender, spice and mint meld into a core of super-expressive dark red and bluish fruits. Here, too, the comparison with the 2013 is telling. There is plenty of potential, that much is clear.	(95-95)		\$150
2014	Cabernet Sauvignon (White Label)	A wine of superb purity, the 2014 takes the estate's entry-level Cabernet Sauvignon (white label) to another level. Lavender, rose petal, mint and a host of dark red and bluish hued fruit grace the finish. Today, the 2014 speaks to finesse above all else. It is also more complete than the 2013, much of that because it was made after the division of parcels and wines in the broader range. What a gorgeous wine this is.	(90-93)		\$125