



Robert Parker's  
Wine Advocate

Closing Date: 10-28-16  
Issue 227

The Independent Consumer's Bimonthly Guide to Fine Wine

## LARKMEAD

LARKMEAD	2015	SAUVIGNON BLANC LILLIE	NAPA VALLEY	\$60.00	WHITE	91
LARKMEAD	2014	CABERNET SAUVIGNON	NAPA VALLEY	\$135.00	RED	93
LARKMEAD	2015	CABERNET SAUVIGNON	NAPA VALLEY	\$135.00	RED	(92-95)
LARKMEAD	2014	FIREBELLE PROPRIETARY RED	NAPA VALLEY	\$165.00	RED	94
LARKMEAD	2015	FIREBELLE PROPRIETARY RED	NAPA VALLEY	\$165.00	RED	(92-95)
LARKMEAD	2014	LMV SALON PROPRIETARY RED	NAPA VALLEY	\$200.00	RED	95
LARKMEAD	2015	LMV SALON PROPRIETARY RED	NAPA VALLEY	\$200.00	RED	(95-97)
LARKMEAD	2014	CABERNET SAUVIGNON DR. OLMO	NAPA VALLEY	\$180.00	RED	95+
LARKMEAD	2014	CABERNET SAUVIGNON SOLARI	NAPA VALLEY	\$240.00	RED	99
LARKMEAD	2014	THE LARK PROPRIETARY RED	NAPA VALLEY	\$360.00	RED	96+

Proprietor Cam Baker and his winemaker Dan Petroski continue to prove irrefutably what a first growth terroir Larkmead possesses. Located directly on the valley floor north of St. Helena, this is a superb site, with alluvial, gravelly soils, but there's diversity in the soil, with plenty of clay, rock and what they refer to as Cortina Gravel.

The **2015 Lillie** is 100% Sauvignon Blanc, coming for the loamy, clay soils of the vineyard. It spent eight months in 25% new French oak and the balance in neutral wood. Beautiful melon fruit, pure grapefruit and honeyed citrus are all present in this medium-bodied wine, which is authoritative, fresh and lively. Drink it over the next several years.

The 2014 "White Label" red wines include the **2014 Cabernet Sauvignon** Napa, which is a beauty. An elegant, Pauillac-style wine with notes of chocolate, cedar wood, fruitcake, unsmoked cigar tobacco and underbrush, it is dense, full-bodied and rich. It is a blend of 93% Cabernet Sauvignon and 7% Petit Verdot aged 19 months in 75% new French oak. There are 2,705 cases of this wine, which finished at 14.7% natural alcohol. It should drink well for 20-25 years, but there's no reason to defer your gratification.

Cabernet is the king in this area, and looking at Larkmead's 2015s, winemaker Petroski remarked on what a fine Indian summer it was, with 100 days separating bloom and harvest. The **2015 Cabernet Sauvignon** is aged in two-thirds new French oak and is their largest cuvée (2,850 cases). A blend of 97% Cabernet Sauvignon and 3% Cabernet Franc, this is a real winner. Concentrated, with an unctuous texture, an opaque purple color and notes of graphite, white chocolate, coffee bean, and plenty of blackberry and cassis, it will be a stunner when released and drink well early on, but it should be capable of lasting 20 or more years.

A blend of 72% Merlot, 25% Cabernet Sauvignon and 3% Petit Verdot, the **2014 Firebelle** finished at 14.9% alcohol. It is a beautifully rich, chocolaty wine with notes of savory spices, black cherries and mulberries, some fudge and coffee bean. It has medium to full body, outstanding purity, concentration and length. It was aged in 66% new French oak for 19 months prior to bottling. Drink it over the next 15-20 years.

The **2015 Firebelle** is their Merlot-dominated cuvée. Coming from the sandy soils called Bale Loam, it's a blend of 71% Merlot, 21% Cabernet Sauvignon and 8% Petit Verdot. This is a more tightly knit wine, with loads of lack fruits, mocha and coffee bean, some licorice and tar. It is deep, rich and promising, with a huge upside. This will be more interesting to taste next year, as it was slightly shut down. Anticipated maturity: 2019-2035.

Even more prodigious is the **2014 LMV Salon**. Composed of 70% Cabernet Sauvignon and 30% Cabernet Franc from the sandy Bale Loam soils of the 110 acres Larkmead possesses, it is a bigger boy at 14.9% alcohol but shows lots of crushed rock and wet gravel minerality, a beautiful, cedary, blackcurrant nose with notes of forest floor, allspice and soy, with more blackberry on the palate as well as some savory herbs and spice. Hints of licorice also make an appearance in this broad, fleshy, juicy and succulent style of wine meant for drinking now and over the next 20 years.

The **2015 LMV Salon Proprietary Red** is 60% Cabernet Sauvignon and 40% Cabernet Franc, aged in 75% new French oak. They tend to make about 600+ cases of this wine, which comes from their gravelly, sandy and clay soils. A sensational wine, largely due to the fabulous Cabernet Franc that's grown at Larkmead, this wine has an opaque purple color and a wonderful, sweet fragrance of forest floor, white flowers, black raspberry and blackcurrant fruit. Opulent, fleshy and rich, with lots of energy, this gorgeous wine shows how important Cabernet Franc can be in a blend from the best sites. Look for this wine to drink fabulously well young and age effortlessly for 25-30 years.

The "Black Label" wines include the **2014 Cabernet Sauvignon Dr. Olmo**, which is 100% Cabernet Sauvignon from the clone of Cabernet that is also called Eisele. This wine spent 20 months in 62% new French oak. A magnificent wine by any standard of measurement, with notes of scorched earth, lead pencil shavings, charcoal embers, and blackberry and cassis fruit, this dense purple wine has undeniable minerality, a beautiful, full-bodied texture and a voluptuous finish. Drink it over the next 25 years.

The **2014 Cabernet Sauvignon Solari**, which is again 100% Cabernet Sauvignon, flirts with perfection. It spent 20 months in 80% new French oak and hails from their Cortina Gravel and clay sectors of the vineyard. They made 793 cases of this compelling wine, which offers great freshness and energy, profound depth of flavor, an opaque black/purple color, and oodles of pure crème de cassis and blackberry fruit intermixed with incense, charcoal and white flowers. It's a stunner to drink now and over the next three decades.

Their very small cuvée of 263 cases, the 100% Cabernet Sauvignon **2014 The Lark** exhibits plenty of sweet chocolate, roasted espresso, blackberry, cassis and white flowers and a long, dense, multi-layered mouthfeel that builds incrementally to a fabulous finish of close to a minute. The alcohol is 14.7% and the wine was aged 20 months in 80% new French oak prior to bottling. This is a stunner and a modern-day classic from Larkmead. Drink it over the next 25-30 years.