



Robert Parker's

Wine Advocate

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| LARKMEAD | | | | | | |
|----------|------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------|-------|-----|
| LARKMEAD | 2011 | SAUVIGNON BLANC LILLIE | NAPA VALLEY | (\$55.00) | WHITE | 92 |
| LARKMEAD | 2010 | PROPRIETARY RED WINE FIREBELLE | NAPA VALLEY | (\$70.00) | RED | 94 |
| LARKMEAD | 2010 | CABERNET SAUVIGNON ESTATE | NAPA VALLEY | (\$70.00) | RED | 95+ |
| LARKMEAD | 2010 | PROPRIETARY RED WINE LMV SALON | NAPA VALLEY | (\$90.00) | RED | 97+ |
| LARKMEAD | 2010 | CABERNET SAUVIGNON SOLARI | NAPA VALLEY (not yet available) | | RED | 98 |
| LARKMEAD | 2009 | CABERNET FRANC | NAPA VALLEY | (\$80.00) | RED | 94 |
| LARKMEAD | 2009 | PROPRIETARY RED WINE LMV SALON | NAPA VALLEY | (\$80.00) | RED | 95+ |
| LARKMEAD | 2009 | CABERNET SAUVIGNON SOLARI | NAPA VALLEY | (\$90.00) | RED | 96 |
| LARKMEAD | 2009 | THE LARK | CALISTOGA (not yet available) | | RED | 97 |

I was completely blown away by Larkmead this year. The 2010s are simply phenomenal across the board. This is also a vintage in which the different terroirs Larkmead works with are vividly marked. While many wineries are aggressively pushing the boundaries of pricing, Larkmead takes the opposite approach. The fashionable cult-loving crowd might look past these offerings, but savvy readers will recognize that Larkmead Cabernet Sauvignons in particular are some of the very best wines being made in Napa Valley today. If forced to choose one top-flight Napa Valley producer that remains under the radar, Larkmead would get my vote. These are spectacular wines that deserve a much broader audience. I can't say enough good things about what proprietor Cam Baker, winemaker Andy Smith and the entire team at Larkmead are doing at this historic property.

The **2011 Sauvignon Blanc Lillie** boasts gorgeous depth and richness because of the low yields of that year. The early harvest and blocked malo preserves plenty of varietal nuance and character. The 2011 is a striking wine, but it is one of the bigger, larger-scaled whites in the vintage. Anticipated maturity: 2012-2016.

The Merlot-based **2010 Proprietary Red Wine Firebelle** boasts stunning depth, power and richness. Black cherries, chocolate, spices and new leather explode from the glass in this deep, resonant wine. There is more than enough fruit to fill out the wine's big, broad-shouldered frame. This is an especially structured vintage for the Firebelle, partly because the Merlot is the lowest ever. Winemaker Andy Smith did a lot of co-ferments with the 2010 to bring all of the elements together. The 2010 is 42% Merlot, 35% Cabernet Sauvignon, 13% Malbec, 5% Petit Verdot and 5% Cabernet Franc. Anticipated maturity: 2018-2030. Larkmead's entry-level **2010 Cabernet Sauvignon Estate** captivates all of the senses from the very first taste. A huge, opulent yet structured Cabernet, the 2010 shows off tons of richness, power and structure, all while maintaining considerable detail and nuance. Black currants, melted road tar and asphalt blast thorough to the intense, palate-staining finish. I can't imagine this being ready to drink before its 10th birthday. The 2010 is 76% Cabernet Sauvignon, 7% Merlot, 7% Petit Verdot, 7% Cabernet Franc and 3% Malbec. This is a great 2010. Anticipated maturity: 2020-2030. The **2010 Proprietary Red Wine LMV Salon** is rich, dark and seamless. Vivid notes of graphite, pencil shavings, plums, cassis and grilled savory herbs come to life in a vivid, kaleidoscopic wine of notable pedigree. The aromatics alone are breathtaking, but the truth

is that everything about the 2010 is phenomenal. Endless layers of fruit flow through to the complex, insanely beautiful finish. This is a dazzling effort. I can't wait to see how the 2010 develops over the coming year. The 2010 LMV Salon is 78% Cabernet Sauvignon, 13% Cabernet Franc and 9% Petit Verdot. Anticipated maturity: 2020-2040. The **2010 Cabernet Sauvignon Solari** has all the trademark Larkmead notes, but here the expression of fruit is all about power, structure and length. The Solari doesn't have the exuberance of the LMV Salon, but it has just as much verticality and length, if not more. According to winemaker Andy Smith, the berries were especially small in 2010, which is where much of the wine's structure comes from. In 2010, overall yields were quite low, so Larkmead did not produce their top of the line Lark Cabernet. Instead, all of that juice went into the Solari. The 2010 is a wine for the exceedingly patient. I only hope to taste it when it is mature. In 2010, the Solari is 100% Cabernet Sauvignon. Anticipated maturity: 2020-2040. The **2009 Cabernet Franc** impresses for its layered, finessed personality. Sweet herbs, roasted coffee beans, licorice and succulent cherries are all woven together in this subtle, refined red. The 2009 can be enjoyed relatively young, yet appears to have the potential to develop considerably in bottle. In 2009, the blend is 75% Cabernet Franc and 25% Cabernet Sauvignon. Anticipated maturity: 2014-2024.

Larkmead's **2009 Proprietary Red Wine LMV Salon** is distinguished for its centeredness, focus and minerality. Graphite, smoke, plums, red cherries and tobacco are all woven together beautifully here. The 2009 is rich, layered and sensual, but with more than enough structure to support aging. Sweet floral notes and a burst of juicy red berries add complexity on the finish. The 2009 is 63% Cabernet Sauvignon, 16% Cabernet Franc, 16% Malbec and 5% Merlot. Anticipated maturity: 2017-2029. The **2009 Cabernet Sauvignon Solari** is super-refined and polished. There is a pure sensuality and finesse to the Solari in 2009 that is striking. Expressive floral spices and red fruit notes form the layered, totally sublime finish. The 2009 isn't as powerful or structured as the 2010, but then again, that is probably a good thing, as the wine will drink well earlier. Anticipated maturity: 2017-2029. Just as impressive as it was last year, the **2009 Proprietary Red Wine The Lark** is all pencil shavings, graphite, incense and smoke. A deep, beguiling wine, the 2009 stands out for its perfumed aromatics, delineated fruit and phenomenal overall balance. Still powerful and impulsive, the 2009 will require patience. It has much less of the early appeal and sheer sexiness of the other 2009s here. Anticipated maturity: 2019-2039.