

LARKMEAD

LARKMEAD	2014	SAUVIGNON BLANC LILLIE	NAPA VALLEY	\$60	WHITE	89
LARKMEAD	2013	CABERNET SAUVIGNON	NAPA VALLEY	\$125	RED	93
LARKMEAD	2013	CABERNET SAUVIGNON	NAPA VALLEY	NA	RED	(92-94)
LARKMEAD	2013	FIREBELLE PROPRIETARY RED	NAPA VALLEY	\$150	RED	94
LARKMEAD	2014	FIREBELLE PROPRIETARY RED	NAPA VALLEY	NA	RED	(93-95)
LARKMEAD	2013	LMV SALON PROPRIETARY RED	NAPA VALLEY	\$150	RED	97
LARKMEAD	2014	LMV SALON PROPRIETARY RED	NAPA VALLEY	NA	RED	(94-96)
LARKMEAD	2013	CABERNET SAUVIGNON (BLACK)	NAPA VALLEY	\$125	RED	96+
LARKMEAD	2014	CABERNET SAUVIGNON (BLACK)	NAPA VALLEY	NA	RED	(91-94)
LARKMEAD	2013	CABERNET SAUVIGNON SOLARI	NAPA VALLEY	\$175	RED	96
LARKMEAD	2014	CABERNET SAUVIGNON SOLARI	NAPA VALLEY	NA	RED	(94-96)
LARKMEAD	2013	THE LARK PROPRIETARY RED	NAPA VALLEY	\$350	RED	100
LARKMEAD	2014	THE LARK PROPRIETARY RED	NAPA VALLEY	NA	RED	(97-99)

This famous, historic estate, highly renowned in the late 1800s, sits to the north of St. Helena and to the south of Calistoga. It is a valley-floor vineyard of 110 acres that has been divided into a hierarchy of quality. The lineup of wines for now remains the same. They have had an incredible run of great successes at Larkmead, with the 2013s easily the match for the impressive 2012s.

The red wines include six cuvées from the estate vineyards, with three of them designated by white labels, while their most expensive and limited cuvées are designated with a black label. The three Black Label wines are about as good as Cabernet Sauvignon can be. The good news is that the 2014 Larkmead White Label wines will be definitely among the more attractive 2014s at high, but relatively realistic price points for world-class Napa Cabernet Sauvignon-based wines.

Cam Baker, the proprietor of Larkmead, told me that the 2013s were off the analytical charts in terms of extract, tannin levels and color density, whereas the 2014s were about 25% less on all the indices of power, strength, color and extract, but they're still very concentrated wines.

The winery does a superb job with its one white wine, the 2014 Sauvignon Blanc Lillie, which is 100% Sauvignon Blanc aged eight months in neutral French oak, with a quarter of it in new French wood. This wine, which has loads of crisp, melony, caramelized grapefruit notes, never sees malolactic fermentation in order to preserve its freshness and crisp acids. It is medium-bodied, has impressive intensity and should age nicely for several years.

The **2013 Cabernet Sauvignon (White Label)** is 100% Cabernet Sauvignon aged 20 months in about two-thirds new French oak. Very Bordeaux-like, with a St.-Julien-like personality, there are notes of crushed stones, gunflint, licorice, cedar wood, Christmas fruitcake and loads of red and blackcurrants. It is a powerful wine with a hint of chocolate as well. This beautiful and structured yet elegant wine should drink well for at least 15-25 years. The **2014 Cabernet Sauvignon (White Label)** (95% Cabernet Sauvignon and 5% Petit Verdot) is sensational, with notes of charcoal, graphite, blackcurrant, spring flowers and a full-bodied, opulent, lovely constructed mouthfeel and lushness. Like most wine from this vintage, it's up-front, incredibly charming and lush. Drink 2016-2030.

The **2013 Firebelle Proprietary Red** is a blend of 76% Merlot, 19% Cabernet Sauvignon and 5% Petit Verdot. This wine shows loads of roasted espresso notes mixed with white chocolate, plum, black cherry and currant. The wine is ripe, opulent, full-bodied and a very sexy, lush example of 2013 to drink over the next 15 or more years. The **2014 Firebelle Proprietary Red** breaks the Cabernet Sauvignon stronghold for wines from Larkmead, with a blend of 72% Merlot, 25% Cabernet Sauvignon and the rest Petit Verdot aged in 65% new French oak. It shows sexy, opulent, chocolaty, mocha and cocoa notes, supple, silky tannins, a heady, plush, almost Pommery-like fatness and succulence in a pure, long finish. This will be drinkable in at least a year or two and evolve gracefully for at least a

decade or more.

The **2013 Proprietary Red LMV Salon**, which is a proprietary red of 74% Cabernet Sauvignon and 26% Cabernet Franc, is stunning. The Cabernet Franc seems to give this wine a tremendous fragrance, as the opaque purple color offers notes of cedar wood, underbrush, forest floor and spring flowers along with creme de cassis and black cherries. With a full body, ripe texture and moderately high tannins, this wine will benefit from 4-5 years of cellaring and keep 30-35 years. The **2014 LMV Salon Proprietary Red**, 70% Cabernet Sauvignon and 30% Cabernet Franc, is an 800-case cuvée that shows beautiful purity of flavor, elegant and complex notes of forest floor, blueberry and black raspberry, chocolate and floral notes. It is opaque, medium to full-bodied and sensationally supple and juicy. This is a beautiful wine that's light on its feet and authentic. Drink 2016-2032.

The opaque purple 2013 Cabernet Sauvignon (Black Label) has a Château Latour-like nose of cedar wood, graphite, oodles of creme de cassis and forest floor, stunning concentration, power and structure. This is an amazing wine, and with 1,635 cases produced, has reasonable availability. This all is produced from the so-called clone 7, which became better known across the street and up on the Vaca hillsides as the Eisele Vineyard clone. This wine should really be laid down for 7-8 years and probably has a good 40-50 years of potential longevity. The impressive **2014 Cabernet Sauvignon (Black Label)** shows loads of gorgeous black fruits, cedar wood, licorice and incense. 1,450 cases of the Black Label Cabernet Sauvignon were made.

The **2013 Cabernet Sauvignon Solari**, which is 95% Cabernet Sauvignon and 5% Petit Verdot (945 cases), is a huge, massive wine of great intensity, coiled tightly at present, but with high tannins, formidable extract and unlimited upside potential. This is a real connoisseur's choice, since it needs a good 5-8 years of bottle age. This is a monster effort from the valley floor and should be respected appropriately. Forget it for now. Anticipated maturity: 2017-2035+. An impressive 2014 is the **2014 Cabernet Sauvignon Solari**, which has killer length and a stunning nose of graphite, forest floor, creme de cassis and subtle wood smoke. This is a wine of great intensity, richness and ultimate potential. The good news is there are 800 cases of the Solari.

The perfect 100% Cabernet Sauvignon, the **2013 Cabernet Sauvignon The Lark**, is a limited production (268 cases) and a magnificent wine. It probably has 50 years of upside potential. The notes of melted chocolate, Christmas fruitcake, creme de cassis, cedar wood, truffles and camphor are all present in this wine of exceptional intensity, purity and a skyscraper-like mid-palate and finish. This is amazing wine that probably won't hit its prime for a decade and last a good 40-50 years. The **2014 Cabernet Sauvignon The Lark** is 100% Cabernet Sauvignon aged in 80% new French oak. It is easily the most concentrated of the three 2014s I tasted. Truly spectacular and great, great stuff from a first-growth vineyard in Napa, this seamless wine is built for 25-30 years of drinkability. 250 cases were made.