

The Enduring Legacy of Larkmead Vineyards

June 1, 2026

For more than a century, [Larkmead Vineyards](#) has occupied a singular place in Napa Valley: deeply historic yet quietly progressive, refined yet grounded in agriculture. Tucked between St. Helena and Calistoga on the valley floor, the estate stretches across 115 contiguous acres framed by the Mayacamas and Vaca mountain ranges. Founded in 1895 and stewarded by the Solari-Baker family since 1948, Larkmead has evolved into one of Napa Valley's most respected family-owned estates, celebrated for estate-grown Cabernet Sauvignon and an unwavering commitment to thoughtful farming and hospitality. Unlike many luxury wineries that lean into exclusivity, Larkmead's appeal lies in its sense of permanence and authenticity—an estate where heritage, innovation, and artistry coexist naturally.



That enduring identity begins with the Solari family itself. When Larry and Polly Solari purchased Larkmead in 1948, Napa Valley was still largely agricultural, decades before the region's ascent onto the global luxury stage. Larry, an Italian immigrant from Tuscany, would go on to become a significant figure in California wine as CEO of United Vintners and later Chairman of the California Wine Institute, while Polly oversaw the day-to-day farming and financial management of the estate. Their daughter, Kate Solari-Baker, and her husband, Cam Baker, assumed stewardship in the early 1990s and helped guide Larkmead into a new era of acclaim, investing in precision viticulture, estate winemaking, and elevated guest experiences while carefully preserving the soul of the property. Today, that multigenerational commitment is reflected in every aspect of the estate, from the wines themselves to the atmosphere guests encounter upon arrival. Larkmead's success has been remarkable by any measure: more than 140 wines scoring 95 points or higher, including two perfect 100-point ratings. Yet the estate never feels driven by accolades alone. Instead, there is a palpable sense that the family's true achievement has been preserving a living piece of Napa Valley history while continuing to move it thoughtfully forward.

At the center of that evolution is the vineyard itself. Larkmead's 115 acres sit atop an intricate patchwork of gravel, clay, and sand soils, with each vineyard block farmed and vinified individually before blending. Under the leadership of vineyard manager Nabor Camarena and winemaker Avery Heelan, the estate has embraced regenerative and organic farming practices designed not only to improve wine quality, but to preserve the health of the land for future generations. In 2023, after years of rigorous work, the estate officially earned California Certified Organic

Farmers (CCOF) certification, adding to its existing Napa Green certifications and GOLD-level sustainability status. At the same time, Larkmead has emerged as one of Napa Valley's more intriguing centers of experimentation through its Research Block Series, a forward-looking initiative exploring alternative grape varieties and climate adaptation in Napa Valley. Rather than viewing climate change as a limitation, the estate approaches it as an opportunity for innovation and exploration. That same spirit carries into wines like the 2023 Firebelle Estate Red Blend, one of the estate's standout bottlings. Built primarily around older-vine Merlot, the wine layers notes of cherry blossom, cassis, dark plum, espresso, and crushed slate into a Bordeaux-inspired blend that feels both polished and quietly expressive.



Hospitality at Larkmead reflects the same balance of sophistication and restraint. Visits are intentionally intimate, centered around private seated tastings overlooking the vineyards rather than bustling tasting bars or theatrical presentations. The Estate Tasting, one of the property's signature experiences, guides guests through the vineyards and winery before concluding with a curated tasting of current releases and library selections paired with local cheese and charcuterie. Throughout the property, Kate Solari-Baker's artwork lends an additional layer of personality and warmth. The Gallery shows off her mixed-media collages and pastel works—many inspired by historic family ledgers and the estate itself—creating an atmosphere that feels more like a private home than a conventional winery. The result is a hospitality experience that feels deeply personal and intellectually engaging without ever becoming overly formal.

Larkmead Vineyards remains refreshingly anchored in substance. Its enduring success stems not from trends or grandiosity, but from a patient commitment to craftsmanship, stewardship, and family legacy. Travelers seeking a deep dive in Napa Valley history, innovation, art, and agriculture, will get it all in spades at Larkmead Vineyards.