DRINKHACKER
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Larkmead
FAMILY ESTATE FOUNDED 1895

Wines of Larkmead, 2026 Releases

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We're longtime fans of California's Larkmead and are pleased to revisit the blue-chip operation's three latest releases, arriving in time for 2026's summer festivities. All are bold reds, so if you don't get to them this year, a few years of cellar slumber will likely do them all some good.

2023 Larkmead Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley – This estate cab is 100% cabernet sauvignon this year, a stark departure from last year's bottling, which was 18% cabernet franc. The nose is tight and grippy, showcasing asphalt notes before opening the door for currants and plums. Rather chewy, almost gummy, in body, the fruit here tends more toward cherry and rhubarb, quite tart at times, and never overly tannic. Ultimately, rather rounded on the finish, the conclusion is a bit citrusy, with lingering raisin notes complementing the brighter fruit tones. **B+ / $125**

2023 Larkmead Firebelle Napa Valley – 63% merlot, 21% cabernet sauvignon, 14% cabernet franc, 2% petit verdot. This wine definitely drinks with more force than its merlot-heavy blend would suggest, biting up top with pepper and rosemary, then showcasing mint, thyme, and sage. Herbal notes dominate and give the midpalate something of a Thanksgiving stuffing quality, amply tannic but well-integrated, with lingering notes of clove, licorice, and turned earth. Dark chocolate broods on the finish, washing away any thoughts of more floral merlot-driven elements, culminating in a fade-out that evokes notes of walnut oil and rhubarb. A dense, immersive wine that requires an appropriate meal to back it up. **A- / $100**

2023 Larkmead Solari Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley – No varietal breakdown provided, but this was 100% cabernet last year and comes across similarly in the 2023 vintage. Black currants run through the wine like a rushing river, leading to rapids featuring dark chocolate and loads of tannin. It's a little singularly focused as it develops, but things do lighten up just so with time in glass, but the experience is never short of intense, with herbal flavors developing on the finish. The conclusion feels a bit short and tart but always agreeable, suggesting a bit more time in cellar might be just the ticket to get this wine fully on its feet. **A- / $200**