



Robert M. Parker, Jr.'s

Closing Date: 12-23-03  
Issue 150

# The WINE ADVOCATE®

The Independent Consumer's Bimonthly Guide to Fine Wine

## LARKMEAD

LARKMEAD	2002	CABERNET SAUVIGNON	NAPA	(release date 2/05)	RED	(90-93)
LARKMEAD	2001	CABERNET SAUVIGNON	NAPA	(\$45.00; release date 5/04)	RED	90+
LARKMEAD	2000	CABERNET SAUVIGNON	NAPA	(\$45.00)	RED	88
LARKMEAD	2002	CABERNET SAUVIGNON SOLARI RESERVE	NAPA	(release date 5/05)	RED	(93-94+)
LARKMEAD	2001	CABERNET SAUVIGNON SOLARI RESERVE	NAPA	(\$60.00; release date 5/04)	RED	93
LARKMEAD	2001	MERLOT	NAPA	(\$35.00; release date 2/04)	RED	90
LARKMEAD	2000	MERLOT	NAPA	(\$35.00)	RED	88

Until recently, this historic winery, dating from the late 19th century, sold all their grapes, but the talented Scotsman, Andy Smith, began to estate bottle small quantities a few years ago. The **2000 Merlot** (aged 18 months on its lees, and bottled without fining or filtration) is a success for this troublesome vintage. A deep ruby/purple color is followed by aromas of melted chocolate, smoke, and earth. With good depth, power, fat, and big, chunky black cherry bouquet as well as flavors, it will provide pleasure over the next 3-4 years. The **2000 Cabernet Sauvignon** (92% Cabernet Sauvignon and 8% Merlot) is outstanding for the vintage. It spent 20 months in French oak before being bottled without fining or filtration. A dense ruby/purple color accompanies a bouquet of cassis, earth, new oak, spice box, and a hint of tobacco leaf. With a chewy texture, fine density, and medium to full body, it is best consumed over the next 10-12 years.

The **2001 Merlot** (86% Merlot and 14% Cabernet Sauvignon) is a big, fleshy, dense, deep ruby/purple-colored effort displaying aromas of cocoa, smoke, dried herbs, and black as well as red fruits. This lush, rich yet structured 2001 will benefit from 1-2 years of cellaring, and will keep for 10-12. The **2001 Cabernet Sauvignon** offers up aromas of blueberries, cassis, licorice, and smoky wood. Medium to full-bodied, with excellent purity, an opulent mid-palate, and a long, persistent, moderately tannic finish, it will be at its peak between 2007-2018. The stunning **2001 Cabernet**

**Sauvignon Solari Reserve** is a fair value given the inflated pricing for so many California Cabernets. Aged in 100% new French oak, this limited cuvée exhibits a saturated black/purple color in addition to big, sweet aromas of creosote interwoven with road tar, *crème de cassis*, cedar, and vanilla. Full-bodied, powerful, concentrated, and exceptionally pure, with loads of glycerin and sweet tannin in the finish, it is young and unevolved, but exceptionally promising. Atypical for a 2001, it is soft enough to be drunk young, but 2-3 years of cellaring is suggested. Drink it over the following 15+ years.

The **2002 Cabernet Sauvignon** (100% Cabernet Sauvignon) possesses a dense purple color as well as sweet, concentrated, fat, fleshy flavors. Made in a more exuberant, in-your-face style than the structured, delineated 2001, the 2002 will be drinkable young, and last for a decade. The saturated, plum/purple-colored **2002 Cabernet Sauvignon Solari Reserve** offers sweet scents of wood smoke, cedar, dark chocolate, and black currants. Full-bodied with terrific intensity framed nicely by formidable tannin, this expansive, multi-layered, low acid Cabernet Sauvignon looks impressive and tastes even better. Although it will be slightly more evolved and forward than the more obviously structured 2001, it will require several years of cellaring. Anticipated maturity: 2006-2020. Tel. (707) 942-6605; Fax (707) 942-6019.