



Robert M. Parker, Jr.'s

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LARKMEAD

2004	CABERNET SAUVIGNON ESTATE	NAPA	(not yet released)	RED	(90-93)
2003	CABERNET SAUVIGNON ESTATE	NAPA	(\$50.00)	RED	93
2004	CABERNET SAUVIGNON SOLARI RESERVE	NAPA	(not yet released)	RED	(94-96)
2003	CABERNET SAUVIGNON SOLARI RESERVE	NAPA	(\$70.00)	RED	94
2004	FIREBELLE PROPRIETARY RED	NAPA	(not yet released)	RED	(88-90)
2003	FIREBELLE PROPRIETARY RED	NAPA	(\$45.00)	RED	92
2004	LMV SALON PROPRIETARY RED	NAPA	(not yet released)	RED	(90-94)
2003	LMV SALON PROPRIETARY RED	NAPA	(\$70.00)	RED	90

This historic 19th century winery has recently received a facelift with new buildings as well as new energy and commitment to quality by proprietor Cam Baker and his highly charged winemaker, Scotsman Andy Smith. A fabulous vineyard site just north of St. Helena, it deserves serious consideration given the quality of the wines emerging over recent vintages. It appears the superb 2002s, which I tasted from bottle last year, have been equaled or surpassed by the 2003s. The **2003 Firebelle** (54% Merlot, 31% Cabernet Sauvignon, and the rest Malbec) exhibits a beautiful perfume of spring flowers interwoven with spice box, mocha, black cherry liqueur, and hint of cassis. Elegant, dense, medium to full-bodied, supple, and voluptuous, it should be enjoyed over the next 7-10 years. The inky ruby/purple-tinged **2003 Cabernet Sauvignon Estate** offers a sweet nose of licorice, black currants, charcoal, and subtle spicy oak. Lovely fruit on the attack is followed by scorched earth-like notes reminiscent of a top-class Graves from Bordeaux. Full-bodied, elegant and rich, with low acidity and ripe tannin, it has 12-15 years of upside potential. The **2003 LMV Salon** (a blend of 60% Cabernet Sauvignon, 25% Cabernet Franc, and 15% Malbec, Petit Verdot, and Merlot) possesses an elegant, Medoc-like personality with hints of menthol, black currants, sweet cherries, plums and cigar smoke. This spicy, medium-bodied, finesse-styled blend should drink well for 7-12 years. The blockbuster **2003 Cabernet Sauvignon Solari Reserve** is fabulous. Sadly, there are only 350 cases of this cuvee, which spent 20 months in 75% new French oak prior to bottling. Its deep ruby/purple color is accompanied by a knock-out nose of charcoal, *crème de cassis*, licorice and

plums. Dense and full-bodied, with admirable purity, texture, and balance as well as a seamless finish, it should be consumed over the next 15-20 years.

The fruit-forward **2004s** include the dark ruby/purple-hued **Firebelle**, a blend of 55% Merlot, 28% Cabernet Sauvignon, and 17% Malbec. Exhibiting a soft, elegant, fruit-driven, sexy, fleshy style, it will be delicious upon release, and should last for 7-8 years. The **2004 Cabernet Sauvignon Estate** possesses outstanding richness, concentration, and intensity along with moderate tannin, full body, and wonderful sweetness. It should drink well for 10-12 years. Fashioned from a blend not unlike the 2003s, the **2004 LMV Salon** outperforms its older sibling with stunning *crème de cassis*, earth, mineral, smoke, and flower characteristics. Ripe, elegant, opulent, and voluptuous, it should drink well young yet age effortlessly for 12-15 years. Lastly, the **2004 Cabernet Sauvignon Solari Reserve** boasts an opaque purple color as well as gorgeous aromas of super-intense *crème de cassis* intermixed with espresso roast, licorice, and smoke, superb concentration, a voluptuous, full-bodied mouthfeel, low acidity and a blockbuster finish. It should drink well for 15 or more years.

As a postscript, proprietor Cam Baker told me the late Andre Tchelistcheff thought the four finest vineyards in Napa Valley circa 1960 were Beaulieu, Inglenook, Beringer and Larkmead, so there is some sound history behind this estate. It's good to see this famous name be resurrected. Tel. (707) 942-6605; Fax (707) 942-6019.