

## Tasting Report: The Balance of 2008 California Cabernet

June 15th, 2011

Just about everybody into top-end California Cabernet Sauvignon believes the 2007 vintage is clearly superior to the state's most recent on the market: 2008. But I argue otherwise. The 2008 vintage produced some glorious Cabs with bright and evocative perfumes, and beautiful fruity and balanced palates that show a lovely interplay of polished tannins with fresh acidity.

Some winemakers say that 2008 produced more terroir-driven Cabs that show their provenance better than 2007. In other words, the slightly longer and cooler grape growing season in 2008 produced less fruit-dominated character in the wines. I have to agree, particularly in my favorite areas such as Oakville, Pritchard Hill and Knights Valley.

This said, I was still surprised with the number of supercharged, alcoholic Cabs I tasted. I couldn't give 90 points or more to wines that burned my palate, especially on the finish. I will post brief tasting notes on them next week.

For now, below are my top scorers from tastings a few weeks ago in California. The 2008 is not overall at the same quality level as 2007, but it's an excellent vintage with some exceptional wines.

Wines are scored on a 100-point scale.



## LARKMEAD NAPA VALLEY SOLARI

**COUNTRY** *United States*  
**SUB REGION** *California*  
**VARIETAL**  
**VINTAGE** *2008*  
**SCORE** *96*

### TASTING NOTES

Menthol and lemon grass with dark fruits and citrus on the nose. Blueberries and blackberries too. Full body, yet reserved and tight with a wonderful finish. Tar, berry and chocolate. Chewy and round. Wonderful. 92% Cabernet Sauvignon, 8% Petit Verdot. Best after 2013. 950 caşes. \$\$

## LARKMEAD NAPA VALLEY LMV SALON PROPRIETARY RED

**COUNTRY** *United States*  
**SUB REGION** *California*  
**VARIETAL**  
**VINTAGE** *2008*  
**SCORE** *95*

### TASTING NOTES

Lots of graphite and lead pencil to the nose and palate. Full yet racy and long with a beautiful backbone of acidity and ultra-fine tannins. Almost a saltiness. Savory at the end. I like this slightly better than 2007. Wonderful length. 530 cases. \$\$