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LARKMEAD						
LARKMEAD	2008	CABERNET SAUVIGNON ESTATE	NAPA	(not yet released)	RED	(92-94)
LARKMEAD	2007	CABERNET SAUVIGNON ESTATE	NAPA	(\$60.00)	RED	94+
LARKMEAD	2008	CABERNET SAUVIGNON THE LARK	NAPA	(not yet released)	RED	(92-95)
LARKMEAD	2007	CABERNET SAUVIGNON THE LARK	NAPA	(\$125)	RED	96+
LARKMEAD	2008	CABERNET SAUVIGNON SOLARI RESERVE	NAPA	(not yet released)	RED	(94-96)
LARKMEAD	2007	CABERNET SAUVIGNON SOLARI RESERVE	NAPA	(\$90.00)	RED	96+
LARKMEAD	2008	FIREBELLE PROPRIETARY RED	NAPA	(not yet released)	RED	(90-93)
LARKMEAD	2007	FIREBELLE PROPRIETARY RED	NAPA	(\$50.00)	RED	93
LARKMEAD	2008	LMV SALON PROPRIETARY RED	NAPA	(not yet released)	RED	(92-94)
LARKMEAD	2007	LMV SALON PROPRIETARY RED	NAPA	(\$80.00)	RED	97

One of Napa Valley's finest estates, and one that is not as appreciated as it should be, Larkmead fashions top-flight wines that should evolve for 15-25 years or more. Scotsman Andy Smith is the consulting winemaker for this estate, which is located off the valley floor just north of St. Helena. The 2007s are strong follow-ups to Larkmead's terrific 2005s and 2006s. The dense purple-colored **2007 Firebelle** (a 1,500-case blend of 62% Merlot, 29% Cabernet Sauvignon, and 9% Malbec) offers abundant aromas of mocha, black cherries, black currants, mocha, coffee, and a subtle hint of herbs. This superbly textured, full-bodied, opulent red is already delicious, and promises to evolve for 15+ years. Composed of 96% Cabernet Sauvignon, 3% Merlot, and 1% Cabernet Franc, the **2007 Cabernet Sauvignon Estate** (nearly 4,000 cases produced) is a great buy for a world-class Napa Cabernet Sauvignon. It exhibits a dense purple color, notes of charcoal, *crème de cassis*, graphite, and forest floor, and a ripe, opulently fruity, rich, full-bodied style. Its endearing silkiness, multi-dimensions, and mature, sweet tannins suggest it has two decades of life ahead of it. A prodigious effort is the **2007 LMV Salon** (a 1,000-case blend of 62% Cabernet Sauvignon, 20% Cabernet Franc, 10% Merlot, and the rest Malbec and Petit Verdot). A proprietary red of this quality with a Napa appellation usually sells for \$200 or more. A dense purple color is followed by a beautiful perfume of spring flowers, ink, espresso roast, *crème de cassis*, and black cherries, a full-bodied, voluptuous texture, staggering depth and purity, and a 50-second finish. This exceptional Napa Cabernet Sauvignon should drink well for 20-25+ years.

The **2007 Cabernet Sauvignon Solari Reserve** is a 1,000-case blend of 90% Cabernet Sauvignon and 10% Petit Verdot. While it reveals less up-front accessibility than the LMV Salon, it is a textbook Napa Cabernet exhibiting notes of high-class unsmoked cigar tobacco, blackberries, black currants, licorice, and graphite. With superb purity, elegance, density, and precision, as well as full-bodied power, this beauty can be enjoyed over the next 25 years. The most limited cuvée comes from a block of vines planted in rocky soils. Made from 100% Cabernet Sauvignon, the **2007 The Lark** reveals plenty of earthiness and minerality, black currant, spice box, and licorice notes, and formidable tannins and depth. The most backward wine of this group, it requires 3-5 years of cellaring, and should keep for three decades thereafter.

The 2008s will not be released until late 2010 and nearly 2011, but this is a very strong vintage for Larkmead. While the wines do not possess the opulence and splendid richness of the 2007s, they complete favorably with the 2006s and 2005s. The blends are slightly different in 208, but the wines all reveal impressive colors, outstanding concentration, and excellent aging potential. I suspect they will be slightly more fruit forward than the 2007s, 2006s, and 2005s as it was a smaller crop. The tannins are very sweet. As the numerical scores indicate, my favorites include the LMV Salon, Cabernet Sauvignon Solari, and Cabernet Sauvignon Estate.

As a historical note, the 2009s will be the 114th vintage this iconic estate has produced. Tel. (707) 942-0167; Fax. (707) 942-6934.