



Robert Parker
Wine Advocate

Closing Date: 12-23-11
Issue 198

The Independent Consumer's Bimonthly Guide to Fine Wine

LARKMEAD

LARKMEAD	2010	TOCAI FRIULANO	CALISTOGA	(\$38.00)	WHITE	92+
LARKMEAD	2010	SAUVIGNON BLANC LILLIE	CALISTOGA	(\$45.00)	WHITE	92
LARKMEAD	2009	FIREBELLE	CALISTOGA	(\$70.00)	RED	93
LARKMEAD	2009	CABERNET SAUVIGNON	CALISTOGA	(\$70.00)	RED	94
LARKMEAD	2009	LMV SALON	CALISTOGA	(\$80.00)	RED	95
LARKMEAD	2010	LMV SALON	CALISTOGA	(not yet available)	RED	(94-96)
LARKMEAD	2009	CABERNET SAUVIGNON SOLARI	CALISTOGA	(\$90.00)	RED	94
LARKMEAD	2010	CABERNET SAUVIGNON SOLARI	CALISTOGA	(not yet available)	RED	(95-97)
LARKMEAD	2007	THE LARK	CALISTOGA	(\$125.00)	RED	96
LARKMEAD	2009	THE LARK	CALISTOGA	(not yet available)	RED	97

Larkmead is one of the historic estates in Napa Valley, with a rich lineage that goes back to 1895. The wines I tasted with proprietor Cam Baker and winemaker Andy Smith were all exceptional. Most importantly, though, these are highly individualistic wines loaded with true personality and class. Pricing remains exceedingly fair by Napa Valley standards, considering the quality of what is in the bottle. The **2010 Tocai Friulano** is a gorgeous wine endowed with tons of varietal character. Ripe pears, apples and flowers are some of the notes that flow from this striking wine. This is quite possibly the most varietally expressive Tocai Friulano I have tasted from the US. It is a fabulous wine. Anticipated maturity: 2012-2016. The **2010 Sauvignon Blanc Lillie** flows from the glass with citrus, white peaches, flowers and mint. It shows good depth, with a little additional volume from the fermentation in oak. The combination of textural richness and varietal character makes this a beautiful, totally complete Sauvignon Blanc. Anticipated maturity: 2012-2016. The **2009 Firebelle** is 53% Merlot, 29% Cabernet Sauvignon, 10% Petit Verdot, 5% Malbec and 3% Cabernet Franc. Dark red fruit, flowers, spices and licorice are some of the many notes that emerge from this impeccable, totally classy wine. It can be enjoyed now, but there is more than enough freshness to allow the wine to age gracefully for a number of years. Darker notes of tar and iron add considerable depth and muscle to the finish. Anticipated maturity: 2012-2021. The **2009 Cabernet Sauvignon** bursts from the glass with a rush of black fruit, smoke, licorice, graphite and tar. All the elements flow together gracefully towards the big, fleshy finish. There is plenty of tannin to support the fruit, suggesting the wine will drink well for a number of years. I especially like the way the wine keeps growing in the glass. This is one of the firmer, more vibrant 2009s readers will come across. Simply put, it is fabulous. Anticipated maturity: 2014-2029. The **2009 LMV Salon** is compelling. Big, yet silky tannins frame a huge core of fruit in this large-scaled, dramatic wine. This is a dazzling effort endowed with tons of richness and depth. Rose petals, licorice and flowers wrap around the intensely satisfying finish. The 2009 is so pure it can be enjoyed today, but it would be a shame not to let this age for at

least a few years. The 2009 is 63% Cabernet Sauvignon, 16% Cabernet Franc, 16% Malbec and 5% Merlot. Anticipated maturity: 2017-2029. The **2010 LMV Salon** is stunning. Black fruit, plums, dark cherries, graphite and crushed rocks are some of the notes that emerge from this strikingly beautiful red. The 2010 shows tremendous polish, energy and sheer class. This is a breathtaking effort. In 2010 the LMV Salon is more Cabernet Sauvignon-focused than it has been in recent years. The blend is 78% Cabernet Sauvignon, 13% Cabernet Franc and 9% Petit Verdot. Anticipated maturity: 2019-2029. The **2009 Cabernet Sauvignon Solari** wraps around the palate with layers of expressive dark fruit. Iron, crushed rocks, smoke and minerals provide a backdrop for this generous, totally inviting wine. Floral notes add lift and brightness on the huge finish. Anticipated maturity: 2014-2024. The **2010 Cabernet Sauvignon Solari** bursts from the glass with an exciting array of black cherries, currants, mint, flowers and minerals. The finish turns positively explosive as layers of fruit supported by the most elegant of tannins totally seduce the palate. This is another fabulous showing. In 2010 Larkmead did not bottle their Lark bottling, but instead used that fruit here. Anticipated maturity: 2020-2030. The **2007 The Lark** has developed lovely smokiness. It shows gorgeous textural finesse and the silkiest of tannins in an understated, classy style. This is one of the more refined 2007s readers will come across, but it is also quite shut down and not fully expressive. The 2007 is 92% Cabernet Sauvignon and 8% Petit Verdot, aged in 100% new barrels. Anticipated maturity: 2017 - 2037. The **2009 The Lark** is rich, dark, sumptuous and impeccably balanced. It is the darkest of the estate's 2009s. Black cherries, plums, graphite and spices are some of the many notes that flow from this impeccable, breathtaking wine. The vibrancy of the fruit and the finesse of the tannin ensure this will be a long-lived wine. Readers who are lucky enough to find the 2009 Lark are in for a treat. This is a dazzling effort from Larkmead. The 2009 Lark is a single-parcel 100% Cabernet Sauvignon. Anticipated maturity: 2019 - 2039.