

Larkmead



FAMILY ESTATE FOUNDED 1895

WILDSAM: NAPA & SONOMA GUIDE

PUBLISHED NOVEMBER 2020

DAY

3

LARKMEAD: WINE PAST, WINE FUTURE

Head north toward Calistoga to find an insightful crossroads of old-time wine lore and future-focused innovation.

Dating to 1895, Larkmead links to some of the industry's most significant names. And somehow, too, you can catch what's next here. "Napa wine goes back to the gold rush," says Dan Petroski, Larkmead's winemaker. "Immigrant culture, coming to America, setting out to find gold in those hills, instead creating California wine country." Petroski is a latter-day pilgrim: a 47-year-old former magazine pro self-remade into an acclaimed winemaker. He maintains a sharp eye for story, noting that Larry Solari, who bought Larkmead in 1948, was so pivotal to early California wine that jug-wine kings Ernest and Julio Gallo carried his casket. His Larkmead wines often nod to history. "Dr. Olmo," a structured cabernet sauvignon, pays tribute to Harold Olmo, "the Indiana Jones of grape-growing," as Petroski says. "He went to Afghanistan to learn about the origins of grape vines." Olmo conducted key research at Larkmead. Fittingly, today Petroski conducts salons on climate change and planting varieties suited to a transformed future. "Timing is everything," the winemaker says. "Varieties we're planting in 2020 were also planted at Larkmead in the '30s. It goes back to understanding what grows here."

