

Source	Reviewer	Rating	Maturity	(Release Cost)
Wine Advocate #212 April 2014	Robert Parker	99	Drink: 2016 - 2056	(\$125)

2004 Larkmead Vineyards Cabernet Sauvignon Solari Reserve
Larkmead Vineyards

Another titan of Napa Valley is Larkmead's 2004 Cabernet Sauvignon Solari Reserve. Composed of 90% Cabernet Sauvignon and 10% Petit Verdot, it is a sumptuous, virtually perfect expression of wine with an inky/purple color, beautiful floral aromas intermixed with sweet, pure black currants and hints of licorice as well as subtle oak. The extraordinary ripeness of the tannins, the flawless integration of acidity, tannin, wood and alcohol, the remarkable finish, and the full-bodied texture make for a tour de force in winemaking. It can be drunk now, but will benefit from another 2-3 years of cellaring. It will age effortlessly for 20-40+ years. How fun it would be to go through life arguing over which is the better wine, the 2004 Salon or the 2004 Solari Reserve.

Cam Baker, one of Northern Napa Valley's iconic figures, administers this extraordinary terroir that was historically famous in the 1800s, but seemingly forgotten after Prohibition was repealed. However, over the last two decades, some remarkable cuvees have emanated from Larkmead. For my tastes, these wines are always dead ringers for great Pauillacs.

Source	Reviewer	Rating	Maturity	(Release Cost)
Wine Advocate #212 April 2014	Robert Parker	98	Drink: 2016 - 2044	(\$125)

2004 Larkmead Vineyards LMV Salon Proprietary Red
Larkmead Vineyards

The 2004 Salon is a proprietary blend of 60% Cabernet Sauvignon, 19% Cabernet Franc, 10% Petit Verdot, 8% Merlot and 3% Malbec. It possesses a youthful dense purple color along with an explosive nose of spring flowers, black raspberries and black currants, a touch of graphite, but no evidence of oak. The wine boasts extraordinary opulence and complexity, multiple dimensions, endless depth and richness, and perfect balance. This compelling 2004 is one of the superstars of the vintage. Approachable now, it should age for 20-30+ years, possibly as long as 50 years.

Source	Reviewer	Rating	Maturity	(Release Cost)
Wine Advocate #212 April 2014	Robert Parker	96	Drink: 2016 - 2034	(\$75)

2004 Larkmead Vineyards Cabernet Sauvignon Estate
Larkmead Vineyards

The 2004 Cabernet Sauvignon Estate boasts gorgeous creme de cassis fruit intermixed with notes of lead pencil, spring flowers and blackberries. The wood component is beautifully integrated. With superb texture, a full-bodied mouthfeel, and a finish that lasts for 45 seconds, this classic Napa Cabernet Sauvignon possesses an unmistakable Pauillac-like personality. It can be drunk now or cellared for 15-20 years.



EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
Beijing, China

AMBASSADOR

August 14, 2014

Mr. Cam Baker
Owner
Larkmead Vineyards
1100 Larkmead Lane
Calistoga, CA 94515

Dear Mr. Baker, *Cam*

I would like to sincerely thank you for your participation in Embassy Beijing's 2014 Independence Day Celebration this year.

As it was my first time hosting the U.S. national day as Ambassador to China, I was particularly gratified by your support. Tastings of your exquisite wine – Larkmead Cabernet Sauvignon – provided an unmatched experience for our guests and set the perfect celebratory tone for our event. I am pleased that the Embassy had the opportunity to share great American wines and to showcase some of the best wine making talent the world over. I am sure it is an experience that our Chinese government contacts and the diplomatic community in Beijing will find hard to forget.

Sincerely,
Max Baucus

Max Baucus
Ambassador

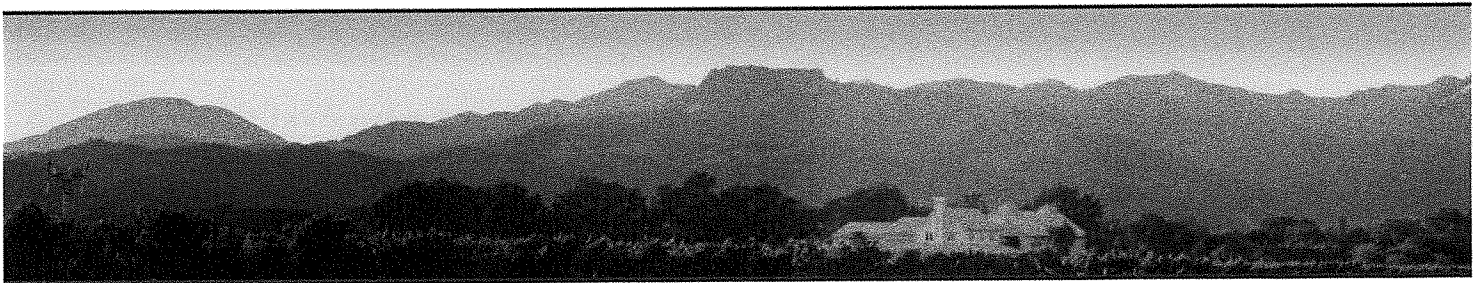
Larkmead
VINEYARDS

VINTNER & GROWER



ESTABLISHED 1895

Larkmead Vineyards has been named as a participating vintner in the seventh annual **Twelve Days of Christmas Dinner Series at Meadowood**. **Cam Baker** and **Kate Solari Baker** will be pouring our wines on **Tuesday, December 16** alongside a dinner prepared by world renowned chef Grant Achatz of Alinea, Next and The Aviary in Chicago, IL. Alinea holds three Michelin Stars and has been listed as one of the top 10 restaurants in the world. Achatz has won multiple awards from the James Beard Foundation including Outstanding Chef (2008), Rising Star Chef of the Year (2003) and Outstanding Service (2010).



Food & Wine

SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE AND SFGATE.COM | Sunday, June 15, 2014 | Section G

JON BONNÉ *Thirst*

Adaptability was key in Napa's trickiest of years

Square peg. Square peg. Square peg.

Couldn't get that out of my head as during my recent tastings of Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon.

After all, Napa Cab is the benchmark by which California wine is measured. And here I had arrived at the 2011 vintage, as round a hole of a year as you could expect — one of the coolest in recent memory, and a particularly tough one in Napa.

I have discussed 2011 in the past. A tricky year for California, perhaps, and yet with silver linings. White wines, for instance, and Pinot Noir — which can shine when handled in a delicate way.

Then there is Cabernet. More than any other, that grape, especially from Napa, lives and dies on magnitude. There is still greater economic incentive to make Napa Cabernet in a high-beam style than with any other wine.

Napa is where cult wines were born. It thrives on wines crafted by, and often for, the rich and powerful. Wines of strength. Wines of intent. Wines that F. Scott Fitzgerald might have conceived as a character worthy of partying with Gatsby. They can stand up and swagger on their own.

Mere analogy? Consider a new entrant, made by Thomas Brown, one of the masters of Napa's swing-for-rafters style.

It's called Swagger.

Of the many things needed to craft a modern Napa wine, the one sure requirement is California's blessed double summer. And 2011 did not deliver that, even if it started out mild enough. From June onward, true summer never quite came. In October, rains and a humid spell that in many cases brought mold provided a grim finish to a messy year.

Historically, the logical move might have been to accept Mother Nature's lean deal, to make wines showing a subtler, less swaggering side of Napa.

But a stride this confident can be hard to break. Hence what my recent tastings revealed: wines with the expected high ripeness, extraction and oak that are today's norm, but without a core of flavor to support it.

A mountain of technical data backed this up: the usual ripeness levels, often from harvests that stretched into November; the usual doses of oak; the usual cooked-fruit flavors, although this time with far less concentration to back them up.

But this was not a usual year. And so many wines seemed to have been squeezed, through the modern wonders of cellar technology, to offer more than nature had dictated. Designed like a Maybach, powered like a Fiat. Quintessential square pegs in round holes.

If I'm sounding harsh — and I am — it's because of the flip side of Napa's ambitious coinage. Ambitions and expectations are enormous. But the valley is not only blessed with amazing soil and climate; it also has been gifted with cash, winemaking talent and speed-dial advice rivaled only by the titans of Bordeaux. To hear the frustration voiced in Napa about 2011 resonates a bit like Tiger bemoaning a windy day at the Masters.

It need not have been this way. There are many 2011s that succeeded beautifully, reminiscent of some of Napa's finest wines in Napa. Typically that happened when vintners read the vintage early and aimed to craft what they knew they could, rather than make wines to someone's grand 100-point blueprints.

You could see it in sugar levels that, on occasion, landed closer to the standards of the 1990s. You could find greatness without oak, in wines for instance like those from Dominus, which managed its usual power without more than its standard 40 percent new oak.

You could see great results in a range of styles, like the accompanying wines I've highlighted from Larkmead and Saddleback, Neyers and Stony Hill.

Others, too, that I tasted along the way. A 2011 from John Kongsgaard, grown in a 30-year-old parcel high on Atlas Peak — full of black currant and all the green olive tones you could expect from Cabernet.

Or one from Mayacamas Vineyards, a wine alternately loved and lambasted through the years for its tough-as-nails style. When I tasted a protean version of the 2011 Mayacamas from cask last year, made by Bob Travers before he sold the property, I exulted in all its classic qualities: red plum more than black, menthol and pine. And more than anything: a completeness to its tannins.

Notice how many of these positive data points come from Napa's experienced hands. Not to dismiss new talent, but there was valuable perspective to be found from winemakers who both perfected Napa's earlier style and survived gnarly vintages like 1998.

The verdict on 2011 is hardly fixed. Some wines still waiting in the wings — I'm thinking of the 2011 Inglenook crafted by Philippe Bascaules that marked

a dramatic shift in that winery's approach (<http://is.gd/1UNcRc>) — show tons of promise.

And yes, some lack the soft edges that the modern Cabernet drinker, fixated on young wines, demands. But if the recent spate of Mayacamas retrospectives are any indication, Cabernet lovers may be rediscovering the pleasures of patience.

What I detect in the best 2011s is a wink back toward many of the things that have made Cabernet so beloved — more than anything its savoriness and durability. I know that when it comes to flavors in Napa Cabernet, the word green has four letters. But the best bottles I tasted displayed the botanical flavors and smells that are a part of this grape's soul: tobacco and dried sage and eucalyptus. Round pegs, round holes.

There's a broader topic under the surface here — the return of Cabernet as Cabernet. I'll save that for another day soon. For now, consider the best of the 2011s as a sign that California can still make what people once loved: complex, interesting Cabernet that does more than just swagger.

Jon Bonné is The San Francisco Chronicle's wine editor.

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Craig Lee / Special to The Chronicle

2011 NEYERS VINEYARDS NEYERS RANCH

Conn Valley Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon (\$48, 14.1% alcohol): This bottling off Bruce Neyers' organically farmed property in eastern Napa found a pitch-perfect expression in the hands of winemaker Tadeo Borchardt. Here's how 2011 could succeed. An oregano-like herbal side frames its meaty structure and subtle blackcurrant fruit. It finds that great Cabernet balance of sleekness and dense flavor — and by current Napa economics, it's a downright bargain.

2011 LARKMEAD NAPA VALLEY CABERNET SAUVIGNON (\$70, 14%): Harvested in late October and finessed by Andy Smith and Dan Petroski, here's another pitch-perfect take on the vintage, structured but not heavy. Dusty, full of dried verbena and a floral aspect, like lilacs, with brilliant juiciness to the red fruit — currants and plums, with fine tannins and smooth licorice flavors.

2011 PHILIP TOGNI VINEYARDS TANBARK HILL NAPA VALLEY CABERNET SAUVIGNON (\$45, alcohol n/a): Who could better finesse a vintage like this than Togni? His regular 2011 is fantastic, but while it ages, the second wine from younger vines shows an equal mastery, full of roasted plum and rosemary, and the fresh, brambly fruit and dense tannins that mark his Spring Mountain site.

2011 MATTHIASSEN NAPA VALLEY CABERNET SAUVIGNON (\$60, 13.7%): Our current Winemaker of the Year has been determined to make his mark with Cabernet. This second vintage shows how his belief in Napa's earlier charms succeeded in a year where it paid to plan for less ripeness. The structure is more finessed than Napa typically managed a generation ago, but in the same spirit — floral tones and chopped thyme on the nose, pretty plummy fruit, chicory and birch bark.

2011 STONY HILL NAPA VALLEY CABERNET SAUVIGNON (\$60, 13%): If Stony Hill's Cabernet can be contentiously lean at times, 2011 was a vintage tailored to fit — old-school wine-making put to perfect use: short fermentation, mostly old oak and an 18-month stay in bottle before release. It's actually more full-fleshed than some previous releases, with Darjeeling tea, dried mint, red currant and sweet cherry fruit, and a beefiness that hints at heft without actually being heavy.

2011 DOMINUS ESTATE NAPA VALLEY RED (\$149, 14.5%): You will not find this to be the most intense, or long-lived, of Dominus vintages. But leave it to Christian Moueix and his team, with their Bordeaux perspective, to adapt to 2011. It is absolutely seamless, with dark plum and cassis fruit, a dusty aspect, graphite and red-fruit juiciness on the finish. Its relative delicacy is balanced by a complete purity of flavor.

2011 SADDLEBACK CELLARS OAKVILLE CABERNET SAUVIGNON (\$68, 14.5%): From the heart of Oakville (with a small dose of Carneros Cabernet Franc), veteran Nils Venge shows a suave Napa expression. Disregard the maple-syrup sweetness that appears on first sniff (there's 70 percent new oak) and focus on the balance of violets, coffee, graphite and pretty currant fruit, and skill evident in its big, savory structure, balancing juicy flavors and a green-olive accent.

2011 ANTICA NAPA VALLEY CABERNET SAUVIGNON (\$55, 14%): Leave it to the Antinori family, and winemaker Nate Weis, to master a vintage like this from the 1,800-foot Antica site near Atlas Peak. True to style, it leads with a sanguine mineral tang, plus sweet cassis fruit, dried marjoram and a stylish dose of oak. Subtle but densely built for the long term.

2011 VINEYARD 29 CRU NAPA VALLEY CABERNET SAUVIGNON (\$54, 14.5%): This second label from Chuck and Anne McMinn, made by Philippe Melka is defined by a sultry, tarry Cabernet presence — kalamata olive, tobacco and dark stones, and juicy, full-bore blackberry fruit.

2011 VON STRASSER RUDY NAPA VALLEY CABERNET SAUVIGNON (\$26, 13.5%): In 2011, Rudy von Strasser used a good dose of fruit from his Diamond Mountain estate in this total steal of an everyday Cabernet. Let's call it right size for the vintage, and ready to drink: full of dried herb and green olive, juicy blackcurrant and plum, with a good dose of mountain tannin.

2011 CONVEXITY NAPA VALLEY CABERNET SAUVIGNON (\$55, 13.5%): A second winning effort from Steve Matthiasson, this one made for a set of investment partners using fruit from the Red Hen and

Vare sites in southern Napa. A savory dried-mint and bark aspect, and riper cassis fruit than you'd expect. Fine-boned and in the lithe, early '90s Cabernet style.

Oakville on a budget. Mild and quintessentially dusty, with a branchlike herbal side and pleasant raspberry fruit.

2011 BRANDLIN ESTATE MOUNT VEEDER CABERNET SAUVIGNON (\$60, 14.5%): This longtime label, now run by Cuvaision, managed a great snapshot of the Brandlin family's historic plot. Give it air to mellow the camphor and oak notes that come first — 22 months in 50 percent new oak — and find juicy mulberry and currant fruit, plus black olive, and a classic Veeder vitality to the tannins.

2011 CONTINUUM ESTATE NAPA VALLEY RED (\$175, 14.7%): Tim Mondavi and his team relied on long Napa experience to finesse a ripe, polished style, although that style might overstep the fruit. If you're going full bore, here's how you do it, with solid doses of Cabernet Franc and Petit Verdot blended in. Sultry oak opens it, with cassia, cured tobacco and the classic roasted-fruit notes of Pritchard Hill (98 percent from the estate). Luscious, savory and showing a hefty structure.

2011 JOSEPH PHELPS NAPA VALLEY CABERNET SAUVIGNON (\$65, 14%): A more vibrant style than I've tasted from Phelps in a while. Evocative of years past — and at more than 15,000 cases harvested from all over Napa, a sign of quality at scale. It's smoky, almost meaty, in its aromas, with lots of fresh plum and coffee. Well-suited to the vintage.

2011 CLIFF LEDE STAGS LEAP DISTRICT CABERNET SAUVIGNON (\$70, 14.3%): The Lede team found a great polish to their Stags Leap fruit, with warm oak (59 percent new) wrapped into cassis fruit and a distinct floral fragrance.

2011 SCRIBE OUTPOST EAST NAPA VALLEY CABERNET SAUVIGNON (\$66, 14.2%): A robust effort from the eastern Napa property held by the Mariani brothers' Sonoma label. Just 30 percent new oak, although the wood shows itself, along with roasted oregano, rich plummy fruit and a leathery character.

2011 CAMERON HUGHES LOT 418 OAKVILLE CABERNET SAUVIGNON (\$25, 14.4%): Here's Hughes, the value-wine negociant king, doing what he does best — in this case hunting down a bit of surplus

MAY 15, 2014

2010 SOLARI – 98 POINTS

This is like Mouton 1982 on the nose with lead pencil, blackberry, mint and asphalt. Iodine, iron and blood, too. Toasted oak and coffee. Full body with an incredible depth of fruit and structure to this red. The texture of velvet is compelling and makes you contemplate all great wines. A pinnacle of pure Napa cabernet. Reserved opulence. Please give this at least three to five years to soften with bottle age: Try in 2018.

2010 LMV SALON – 96 POINTS

Super aromas of dark berries, bay leaf, stones and mint, including spearmint. It's full-bodied, with a fabulous texture of polished tannins and a long, long finish. A wine with tension and energy. Better in 2017 but super already.

2010 CABERNET – 95 POINTS

Fabulous aromas of blackberries, mint and licorice follow through to a full body with amazing texture and depth of fruit. It fills your mouth with wonderfully fresh tannins and a long, long finish. Pure velvet. Amazing quality. A blend of 76% cabernet sauvignon, 7% cabernet franc, 7% merlot, 7% petit verdot and 3% malbec.

2010 FIREBELLE – 94 POINTS

Intense violets, dark chocolate and berries. Licorice. It's full-bodied with super-integrated tannins and a beautiful silky texture. It's long and fresh. A blend of 42% merlot, 35% cabernet sauvignon, 13% malbec, 5% petit verdot and 5% cabernet franc.

2011 CABERNET – 93 POINTS

Aromas of pine needles, fresh herbs, blackberries and currants follow through to a full body with a silky tannin texture and a juicy, mineral and light mint character. They declassified 45% of wine made and sold it in bulk so the best wines went into this. Better in 2015. 100% cabernet sauvignon.

2011 FIREBELLE – 90 POINTS

A balanced, silky red with chocolate, berry and coffee, following through to a full to medium body and super-integrated tannins. A blend of 42% merlot, 27% malbec, 21% cabernet sauvignon and 10% cabernet franc. The high percentage of malbec gives a juiciness to the wine. Drink now.