

Château Smith Haut Lafitte Blanc 2013

CSPC# 749828

750mlx12

14.0 % alc./vol.

Grape Variety

90% Sauvignon Blanc, 5% Semillon, 5% Sauvignon Gris

Appellation

Pessac-Léognan

Classification

Grand Vin de Graves

Website

www.smith-haut-lafitte.com

General Info

Château Smith-Haut-Lafitte has been transformed during the last decade from being a perennial underachiever to being one of the leading estates in the Graves region. For many years it was owned by the Bordeaux négociant Eschenauer - in 1990 it was bought by former Olympic skiing champion, Daniel Cathiard. He cut down on the amount of chemicals and herbicides used in the vineyards, and fully modernised the winemaking facilities. The proportion of new oak barrels used in the maturation process was increased and a trio of eminent oenologists (including the ubiquitous Michel Rolland) were hired as consultants.

Vintage

After a quite gentle, yet humid winter, the vine woke up on due date as budbreak happened from the 10th to the 12th of April. The gloomy, cold and humid spring (April, May, June) strongly slowed down the vine cycle. We were fortunately spared by the spring frost of the 27th of April. Flowering was late by 2 weeks and disturbed by weather conditions, generating millerandage and on few plots of Merlot some important coulure (flower abortion).

A beautiful sunny summer with cool nights unleashed a very favourable maturation phase for white grapes: coolness of nights preserving aromatic freshness and acidity. These positive weather conditions made up for most of the heterogeneity of flowering and induced a quick and homogeneous veraison on the 10th and the 11th of August for the whites.

Vineyards

11 hectares being planted to white, specifically 90% Sauvignon Blanc, 5% Sauvignon Gris and 5% Semillon. The average vine age is 38years, on the usual 101.14 and 3309 rootstocks, and planting density is between 7500 and 10000 vines per hectare. The soils are typical of the region, mainly Gunzian gravel.

The Cathiards have invested millions in the estate's vineyard, applying organic winemaking across the 78 hectares (67 planted to red, 11 to white). Technical director Fabien Teitgen's buzzword is "bio-precision," an approach that combines low-intervention, almost entirely biodynamic viticulture with satellite technology that reveals how the grapes have ripened.

Harvest

Harvest started late on the 18th of September with the first in-field sorting on some plots of young Sauvignon blanc vines. The heart of the harvest for the Sauvignons blancs started on the 23rd of September to finish on the 30th with the old vine's plots with beautiful maturity and complexity. We picked the Semillons on the 30th of September and 1st of October. The rain coming back during the last days of September made us sort more thoroughly the last plots picked.

Maturation

Fermentation in barrel: 50% new barrels from our integrated cooperage, and 50% barrels used for one previous vintage. Ageing in barrel with regular bâtonnage (lees stirring) for 12 months.

Tasting Notes

Château Smith Haut Lafitte offers a bright, vibrant pale yellow colour with green hue. The first nose, quite discreet, offers delicate notes of white fruits and flowers. Through aeration the nose opens up to become very expressive, complex, rich with an explosion of yellow fruits, peach, apricot, mango, citrus fruits (grapefruit), sweet spices, star anise and even a hint of caramel. This nose, both mature and refreshing, reflects perfectly the good weather conditions at the end of grape maturation. On the palate, the subtle balance between acidity freshness and fruit maturity appears clearly to give the wine a harmony of ripeness, richness, tension and vivacity. The attack is tense, then the mouth enlarges to become dense, more unctuous with a sense of fatness



Serve with	Asian style salads, Asian-style pork tenderloin with noodles & lime peanut dressing; BBQ lobster; Avacado & papaya salad.
Production	2500 cases made
Cellaring	Drink 2014-2019
Scores/Awards	<p>96 points - James Molesworth, Wine Spectator - March 31, 2016</p> <p>94-97 points - James Molesworth Wine Spectator - Web Only 2014</p> <p>93-95 points - Robert Parker, Wine Advocate #214 - August 2014</p> <p>92-94 points - Neal Martin, Wine Journal - May 2014</p> <p>96 points - James Suckling, JamesSuckling.com - February 2016</p> <p>95-96 points - James Suckling, JamesSuckling.com - April 2014</p> <p>92 points - Roger Voss, Wine Enthusiast - March 1, 2016</p> <p>93-95 points - Roger Voss, Wine Enthusiast - April 2014</p> <p>91-94 points - Stephen Tanzer's International Wine Cellar - June 2014</p> <p>17 points - Jancis Robinson, JancisRobinson.com - June 2015</p> <p>17 (90) points - Stephen Spurrier, Decanter.com - April 2013</p> <p>95 points - Tim Atkin, MW - timatkin.com - April</p> <p>94 points - Jeff Leve, thewinecellarinsider.com - February 1, 2016</p> <p>94 points - Jeff Leve, thewinecellarinsider.com - April 21, 2014</p> <p>91-93+ points - Jeremy Williams, winewordsandvideotape.com - April 2014</p> <p>17+ points - Farr Vintner - April 2014</p> <p>94 points - Jeannie Cho Lee MW, asianpalate.com - April 2014</p> <p>89-91 points - Falstaff Magazine (score only)</p> <p>16.5 points - Gault & Millau (score only)</p> <p>16.5 points - La Revue du Vin France (score only)</p> <p>94 points - Bettane & Desseauve (score only)</p> <p>93-95 points - Antonio Galloni, Vinous - April 2014</p>
Reviews	<p><i>"This has a gorgeous feel, with opulent fruit offset by racy herb notes and acidity as lemon sherbet, shortbread and white peach flavors are backed by a salted butter— and tarragon-laced finish. Hints of talc and fennel skitter in the background. Seriously long and still a touch youthful on the finish, this is one for the cellar. Sauvignon Blanc, Sauvignon Gris and Sémillon. Best from 2017 through 2023. 2,500 cases made."</i></p> <p>- JM, Wine Spectator</p> <p><i>"A talc note gives way quickly to straw, verbena and shortbread flavors at the core, along with macadamia nut, lemon curd and brioche. Richly layered, with impressive range, this flattering style has nicely embedded acidity to carry it all. A gorgeous white in the making. Score range: 94-97."</i></p> <p>- JM, Wine Spectator</p> <p><i>"This spectacular dry white is usually 90% Sauvignon Blanc and the balance Sauvignon Gris. Copious notes/aromas of peach, honeyed grapefruit, spring flowers and a caramelized melony aspect can be found in this very elegant, pure, complex dry white. Medium-bodied, crisp, fresh and deep, this 2013 can evolve for 12-15 years or more."</i></p> <p>- RP, Wine Advocate</p> <p><i>"A blend of 90% Sauvignon Blanc and 5% each of Semillon and Sauvignon Gris, the Smith Haut Lafitte Blanc has a tightly wound bouquet: sultry at the moment with light gooseberry and Granny Smith apples. The palate is well balanced with a fine line of acidity, citrus lemon and lime zest, with a gradual build towards its precise finish. Excellent. Tasted March 2014."</i></p> <p>- NM, Wine Journal</p> <p><i>"Dense yet agile Smith with dried apple, lemon, aniseed, and gunpowder aromas and flavors. Some stones too. Full body, very racy and fine. 90% sauvignon blanc, 5% sauvignon Gris and 5% Semillon. Drink or hold."</i></p> <p>- JS, JamesSuckling.com</p> <p><i>"Why drink Silex from Dagueneau? This is really something exceptional with incredible density and power. Full-bodied, dry and mineral and lemon zest with fabulous length and beauty. This is definitely one to buy in 2013."</i></p> <p>- JS, JamesSuckling.com</p>

Reviews *"Still tight, this wine needs time to reveal its potential. Hints of the tropical fruits, fresh acidity and light spice and toast remain masked for the moment, just needing aging. Drink from 2019."*

- RV, Wine Enthusiast

"Barrel Sample. Fragrant, fruity, ripe and spicy, this is an impressive wine. The wood balances the fruitiness, giving a sense of structure, while crisp acidity gives the wine a fine lift at the end."

- RV, Wine Enthusiast

"Bright straw yellow. Captivating aromas of tangerine, lemon, grapefruit, white flowers and aromatic herbs. Bright and juicy on the palate, with a laser beam of acidity lifting the bitter grapefruit, yellow melon and lemon verbena flavors. Finishes long, clean and savory, with sneaky concentration to the flint and saline nuances. One of the best white wines from this estate in memory. Technical director Fabien Teitgen noted that "in 2103, our ability to identify ripeness levels in our different plots and to monitor leaf growth and development via satellite imagery allowed us to harvest and then vinify individual parcels in small wooden vats at the best possible point in time, which was a big help." Teitgen also believes that the optical sorting machines were especially useful in 2013 and help explain the outstanding quality of this 2013 white."

- ST, International Wine Cellar

"This magnum had apparently been given to Tony Stebbings specifically for this lunch when he visited the chateau recently. You can see me nursing it in the picture, it showed very well as an aperitif. Possibly a richer vintage would have demanded food, but it had just the right amount of creamy Sauvignon fuminess for our purposes. (10-Jun-2015)"

- JR, JancisRobinson.com

"Lemon yellow, slightly floral fruits, very good weight, length and complexity to come out. Drink: 2015-20"

- SS, Decanter.com

"This isn't far behind the Haut-Brion in terms of quality and it's less than a tenth of the price, combining Sauvignon Blanc with 5 percent each of Semillon and Sauvignon Gris. Subtle, leesy, toasty and waxy with bright minerality and tangy acidity."

- TA, timatkin.com

"One of the richer textured white Bordeaux wines of the vintage, the flamboyant, vanilla, spice, pineapple, white peach, Meyer lemon and grapefruit aromatic display is completed with the display of luscious, white fruits and slightly honeyed, citrus in the finish."

- JL, thewinecellarinsider.com

"With good density, freshness and length, there is a blast of fresh-squeezed lemon, lime, vanilla and grapefruit that carries through from start to finish along with the perfect... (full tasting notes on the WCI website). (21-Apr-2014)"

- JL, thewinecellarinsider.com

"Palest straw; very round and attractive; well integrated oak; some candy, fresh cut melon and white flowers; palate very fine; full and intense with great length. The best white at the Malartic tasting for me. Good acidity running through this. The estate feels that it has the saline quality of 2007 but the depth of 2010 with more acidity. Great stuff. [90% Sauvignon Blanc, 5% Sémillon, 5% Sauvignon Gris]. Drink 2016-2023. Tasted UGCB April 2014. 91-93+"

- JW, winewordsandvideotape.com

Reviews *"11 hectares at Smith Haut Lafitte are planted with white varieties - 90% Sauvignon Blanc, 5% Sauvignon Gris and 5% Semillon. A bright pale lemon colour with a rich, exotic nose of pineapple, mango and toast. The palate has a pronounced intensity and good weight which is balanced by crisp acidity. More exotic fruits - passionfruit, melon and pineapple - layer the palate. A modern, but delicious style, with a long finish."*
- Farr Vintners

"Lovely purity of flavours with wonderful acid-fruit tension and energy. A beautifully composed white from Pessac Leognan - this wine stood out in a flight of 17 whites tasted blind. Tasted in Bordeaux, France. Maturity: Young. (01-Apr-2014)"
- JCL, asianpalate.com

"The 2013 Smith Haut Lafitte Blanc is beautiful, but it is going to need time in bottle before offering its best drinking. Today, the 2013 is intensely mineral and tightly wound, both of which bode extremely well for the future. The combination of aging in barrel on the lees but blocking the malolactic fermentation results in a white of unusual texture, pedigree and pure class. Fans of the Smith Haut Lafitte Blanc, and that includes me, will not want to miss the 2013. The blend is 90% Sauvignon Blanc, 5% Semillon and 5% Sauvignon Gris."
- AG, Vinous

"Certainly, one of the best wines of the Futures campaign. Its aromatic complexity and freshness provide the elegance you expect from truly exceptional white wines. Florence and Daniel Cathiard are the duo behind the major transformations that have marked the last two decades of the estate. They not only restored the chateau's tower and cottage; they also added a cooperage to the estate's buildings and renovated the underground cellars. Facing north, the 11-hectare vineyard dedicated to white wines has been plowed by horse for the past 10 years. Brand new fermentation and barrel rooms were put in place in 1995 for the express purpose of crafting a first-rate white, which today rivals the appellation's best. This is an estate rapidly making gains."
- SAQ (Quebec Liquor Stores)
