

Château Smith Haut Lafitte Blanc 2017

CSPC# 831550

750mlx12

13.5 % alc./vol.

CSPC# 855512

750mlx6

13.5 % 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

A few low-lying vines and a small section near the trees were lost to frost this year at Château Smith Haut Lafitte, but this vineyard got off lightly compared to other estates in Pessac-Léognan. The frosted areas were those that would have gone into the second labels: Les Hauts de Smith and Le Petit Haut Lafitte. However, the Cathiards' other estate in this commune, Château Cantelys, lost 60% of the crop to the frosts. "The seeds were not totally ripe this year, so extraction was more about maceration with very gentle extraction, so as not to pull out the bitter seed tannins," commented winemaker Fabien Teitgen. He managed to use a small proportion of whole bunch—about 25%—for the Merlot component this year, while the other 75% was produced with whole berries.

Sustainability

We do all we can to enhance microbial life by adding our own organic compost and protect the soil by planting hedges and trees. In addition, there are beehives on the estate, and we plough the white wine vineyard's fragile slopes with a horse. Maintaining wooded areas and hedges not only embellishes the countryside, but also enhances the harmony we unceasingly seek with nature: "winegrowers are landscape architects". Château Smith Haut Lafitte plants vines propagated from our vineyards thanks to our very own vine nursery on Ile de Lalande. This island location and protected ecosystem enables us to maintain the vine's genetic diversity as well as the complexity of our wines.

We recover rainwater, recycle wastewater, have solar panels, transform vine cuttings into compost or use them for heating.... Everything is regenerated!

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

Smith Haut Lafitte Blanc was picked between 24th August and the 9th September, making it as early a harvest as in 2003 and 2011, though the overall impression of freshness trumps either of those warm early vintages.

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	Crystalline and very pure on the nose, with fresh bergamot and orange blossom notes alongside limey green fruit and a long, complex fruit and spice dominated palate. Powerful, persistent, and mouth-watering. Great complexity here, with lovely aromatics already and a broad, expansive, but focused palate.
Serve with	Asian style salads, Asian-style pork tenderloin with noodles & lime peanut dressing; BBQ lobster; Avocado & papaya salad.
Production	2,083 cases made.
Cellaring	Drink 2021-2030
Scores/Awards	<p>96 points - James Molesworth, Wine Spectator - March 31, 2020</p> <p>94-97 points - James Molesworth, Wine Spectator - April 2018</p> <p>97+ points - Lisa Perrotti-Brown, Wine Advocate - March 2020</p> <p>96-98+ points - Lisa Perrotti-Brown, Wine Advocate #236 - April 2018</p> <p>97 points - James Suckling, JamesSuckling.com - February 2020</p> <p>96-97 points - James Suckling, JamesSuckling.com - April 2018</p> <p>97 points/Cellar Selection - Roger Voss, Wine Enthusiast - March 1, 2020</p> <p>95-97 points - Roger Voss, Wine Enthusiast - April 1, 2018</p> <p>17 points - Jancis Robinson, JancisRobinson.com - May 2019</p> <p>16.5 points - Jancis Robinson, JancisRobinson.com - May 2018</p> <p>17.5 points - Julia Harding, JancisRobinson.com - April 2017</p> <p>96 points - Jane Anson, Decanter.com - April 2018</p> <p>91-93 points - Tim Atkin, MW - timatkin.com - April 2018</p> <p>17 points - Farr Vintner - April 2018</p> <p>94 points - Neal Martin, Vinous - February 2020</p> <p>92-94 points - Neal Martin, Vinous - February 2018</p> <p>96 points - Antonio Galloni, Vinous - February 2020</p> <p>93-96 points - Antonio Galloni, Vinous - April 2018</p> <p>97 points - Jeb Dunnuck MW - February 2020</p> <p>18.5+ points - Matthew Jukes, MW - April 2018</p>
Reviews	<p><i>"Juicy energy ripples from start to finish, with gooseberry, yellow apple, chamomile, tarragon, and verbena notes giving this a tangy and flattering character. Reveals a long-salted butter edge on the finish. Lovely now but will fan out and become plumper with time. Sauvignon Blanc, Sémillon and Sauvignon Gris. Best from 2021 through 2030. 2,083 cases made"</i></p> <p>- JM, Wine Spectator</p> <p><i>"Tight, but with a lot to like, from the yellow apple, white peach and star fruit core to the extra brioche, straw, honeysuckle, and verbena nuances that weave throughout. Shows weight and drive on the finish. A beauty. 2,083 cases made"</i></p> <p>- JM, Wine Spectator</p> <p><i>"The 2017 Blanc prances out of the glass with pretty, cheerful scents of fresh green apples, lemongrass, lime leaves and white peaches plus spicy touches of fresh ginger, coriander seed and white pepper. Medium-bodied, the palate has fantastic intensity and tension, with a racy backbone cutting through the tightly knit citrus and spice layers, finishing long and mineral laced. 2024 – 2053"</i></p> <p>- LPB, Wine Advocate</p> <p><i>"A blend of 90% Sauvignon Blanc with 5% Sauvignon Gris and 5% Sémillon, the Smith Haut Lafitte 2017 Blanc offers up gorgeous, super-intense scents of pink grapefruit, white peaches, kumquats, and ginger with wafts of under-ripe pineapple, lime blossoms and crushed rocks. Medium-bodied, it's very polished, sophisticated, and wonderfully electric in the mouth, with sparks of citrus fruits, tropical notions and floral perfume exploding on the palate, finishing with epic persistence."</i></p> <p>- LPB, Wine Advocate</p> <p><i>"This is fabulous white with sliced apples, pears, stones, flint, and light cream. Really incredible. Full-bodied, yet so tight and polished with superb finesse and density at the same time. A fantastic Smith white. A blend of 90% sauvignon blanc, 5% sauvignon gris and 5% Semillon. Drink or hold."</i></p> <p>- JS, JamesSuckling.com</p>

Reviews *“This shows serious density and beauty with fantastic complexity and dimension. Full-bodied yet so fresh and beautiful. Layered and tight at the same time. Exciting to follow this one.”*
- JS, JamesSuckling.com

*“This wine is distinct in its texture, with a mere hint of spice from wood. What makes it special is the harmony among perfume, acidity, texture, and superb fruit. The wine finishes with a touch of saltiness. It needs plenty of time ... *Cellar Selection* (RV)”*
- RV, Wine Enthusiast

“The 2017 Smith Haut Lafitte Blanc was deprived of a hectare parcel of 80-year-old Sauvignon that was pulled up last year. It has a focused bouquet with mineral-driven citrus fruit, yellow plum, and honeysuckle, the 50% new oak nicely integrated. The palate is medium bodied with taut citrus fruit laced with pineapple and tangerine. There is a subtle tropical undercurrent to this Smith Haut-Lafite Blanc. It fans out generously towards the finish with a long and satisfying, lightly honeyed finish. This is a very fine white Smith Haut-Lafitte, already surfeit with pedigree that should age with style and panache. (RV)”
- RV, Wine Enthusiast

“Lots of oak footprint in the aroma: mealy, creamy spice and cedar. But this is just the first impression. On the palate, the fruit really shows in depth and waxy lemon freshness. I am surprised there’s not more Sémillon in the blend given the breadth and richness but maybe this is where the Sauvignon Gris adds weight. Deep, rich, and long and still mouth-wateringly fresh. (JH) 17/20 points”
- JR, JancisRobinson.com

“Heady, intense nose with a little lanoline richness, a slightly catty overlay, and a pungent finish. This is quite a showy wine though clearly successful. A little peachiness. Long. Drink 2019-2027”
- JR, JancisRobinson.com

“Inviting, creamy, cedary aroma. Oak more evident than on most of the Pessac’s tasted so far this morning in the UGC primeurs line-up – almost a note of honey – but perfectly balanced. Rich, mealy and full of ripe pear and a hint of orange. Impressive depth, harmony, and persistence. Incredibly moreish even while embryonic. Drink 2020-2027”
- JH, JancisRobinson.com

“A sophisticated, grown up white with the most beautifully placed savoury white peach flesh, shadowed by lime and tea leaves, and enclosed by slate. The fresh tension stands head and shoulders above many wines in this vintage. It’s full of personality, zip and complexity, and is clearly going to age beautifully. Drinking Window 2022 – 2034”
- JA, Decanter.com

“With honeysuckle, lemons, pear, almonds and traces of vanilla bean, this wine is loaded with sweet yellow fruits, crushed rocks, and vibrant acidity. Offering a buoyancy and a profundity of flavor with length and complexity, this wine was produced from a blend of 90% Sauvignon Blanc, 5% Sauvignon Gris and 5% Semillon. It reached 13.5% alcohol with a pH of 3.15.”
- JL, thewinecellarinsider.com

*“Warm, and some oak already showing on the nose. Rich lime and gooseberry fruit flavours, cream, honey, and toast. Rather complex and delicious. Deeply flavoured and balanced. Really good. **Barrel Sample: 91-93”***
- TA, timatkin.com

“This is rich, ripe, and juicy on the nose with plush mango and passion fruit, creamy peaches and a hint of sweet smoke. The palate is plush, round, and smooth with a seamless texture. Creamy lemon curd fruit coats the mid palate and allows the waves of fresh acidity to lift tropical notes to become juicy grapefruit and peach. The finish is long, spicy, and generous, with a creamy texture. A superb and slick effort.”
- Farr Vintners

Reviews

“The 2017 Smith Haut Lafitte Blanc has a really enticing bouquet with Granny Smith apples, Mirabelle, freshly sliced pear and light, flinty aromas. There is plenty of energy here, perhaps even more than the following vintage. The palate is medium bodied with pretty orange rind and tangerine notes on the entry. This is very focused and full of tension, the finish quite saline with impressive persistency. Drink 2022-2040.”
- NM, Vinous

“The 2017 Smith Haut Lafitte Blanc was deprived of a hectare parcel of 80-year-old Sauvignon that was pulled up last year. It has a focused bouquet with mineral-driven citrus fruit, yellow plum, and honeysuckle, the 50% new oak nicely integrated. The palate is medium bodied with taut citrus fruit laced with pineapple and tangerine. There is a subtle tropical undercurrent to this Smith Haut-Lafite Blanc. It fans out generously towards the finish with a long and satisfying, lightly honeyed finish. This is a very fine white Smith Haut-Lafitte, already surfeit with pedigree that should age with style and panache. Drink 2021-2035.”
- NM, Vinous

“The 2017 Smith Haut Lafitte Blanc is very clearly one of the wines of the vintage. Rich, voluptuous and creamy, the 2017 has so much to offer. Citrus peel, white flowers and mint are all generous in the glass. More than that, the 2017 offers an interplay of tension and textural opulence that is incredibly appealing. The blend is 90% Sauvignon Blanc, 5% Sémillon and 5% Sauvignon Gris. (AG)”
- AG, Vinous

“The 2017 Smith Haut Lafitte Blanc is magnificent. In the glass, the 2017 reminds me of the superb 2013, but with less austerity and more depth. Jasmine, lemon confit, white flowers and mint are finely cut. Above all else, the 2017 Blanc is a wine of energy and pure pedigree. I loved it. The blend is 90% Sauvignon Blanc, 5% Sémillon and 5% Sauvignon Gris.”
- AG, Vinous

“Taken from mostly older vines (60+ years) and this brings much more intensity and depth. Incredible and so vibrant, this is one of the great vintages because there is nothing too fat or oily about this wine and the oak is bright and almondy as opposed to nutty and spicy. Stunning and with great potential, this will be a wine which will age very well, but I will still on drinking it on the youthful side.”
- MJ, matthewjukes.com

“One of the whites of the vintage is the 2017 Chateau Smith Haut Lafitte Blanc, which is based on 90% Sauvignon Blanc and 5% each of Sauvignon Gris and Semillon. Offering a huge, salty, mineral-laced bouquet of crushed lemons, acacia flowers, pineapple, and crushed rocks, it hits the palate with full-bodied richness, racy acidity, a stacked mid-palate, and a crisp, chiseled, lengthy finish that keeps you coming back to the glass. It has the fruit and texture to drink nicely even today, yet my money is on it benefiting from 2-4 years of bottle age, and it should have over two decades of longevity.”
- Jeb Dunnuck
