

# Château Smith Haut Lafitte Rouge 2011

CSPC# 749551

750mlx12

13.7% Alc./Vol.

<b>Grape Variety</b>	55% Cabernet Sauvignon, 36% Merlot, 8% Cabernet Franc, 1% Petit Verdot
<b>Appellation</b>	Pessac-Léognan
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.smith-haut-lafitte.com/en/smith-haut-lafitte-vin-rouge.html">http://www.smith-haut-lafitte.com/en/smith-haut-lafitte-vin-rouge.html</a>
<b>General Info</b>	<p>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.</p> <p>In July 2011, Chateau Smith Haut Lafitte purchased a majority of the vineyard property belonging to the neighboring estate, Chateau Le Thil. Out of the 42.5 acres of vines, 28.7 acres, the chateau and 20 acres of parkland went to Smith Haut Lafitte. Much of that land is located next to Smith Haut Lafitte and was actually part of the original estate that was owned by Lodi Duffour Dubergier. In essence, this reunited the original vineyards. Le Thil belonged to his nephew, from whom the de Laitre family is descended. The remaining vineyard land was sold to Les Carmes Haut Brion.</p>
<b>Vintage</b>	<p>The vintage 2011 can be considered dividing the year into two sharply-contrasting weather phases that had major impacts for the grape's characteristics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• First phase: spring in advance compared to regular Bordeaux standards, the warm and dry weather induced an early vintage.</li><li>• Second phase: a summer with a quite low temperature average that ensured slow ripening of the grapes preserving their natural acidity.</li></ul> <p>The vine growing path was fast as the different steps of the vine cycle are directly correlated with the amount of energy the plant receives: with these spring conditions, everything went fast. The water availability was the key of this vintage: drought slowed the vegetative expression of the vine (shorter shoots and smaller leaves) but with differences within the vineyard according to plots age and soil nature: old vines managed to find adequate water amount in the deep gravel terroirs. The summer weather conditions were favourable to a slow maturation of the grapes, preserving their acidity, thanks to mild temperatures.</p> <p>The combination of spring warmth and summer gentleness was favourable to harvest early grapes with well-balanced aromatic profiles (good acidity), provided the vines are deeply rooted in a great terroir, well-stabilized in their soil, well-established in their milieu.</p>
<b>Vineyards</b>	The 55 hectares of vineyards are located on a gravel ridge to the east of Château Haut-Bailly. The red wine is a blend of Cabernet Sauvignon (55%), Merlot (35%) and Cabernet Franc (10%). Average vine age is 38 years
<b>Harvest</b>	Harvest started mid-September with the Merlots to end on the 30 <sup>th</sup> of September with the Cabernets Francs.
<b>Vinification/ Maturation</b>	<p>Whole uncrushed grape berries fermented in small oak vats at 28°C and extraction with manual <i>pigeage</i> (punching down the cap). Aged in barrel on the lees for 18 months (65% of the new barrels were made at the estate's own cooperage), and only racked once. Duration of ageing adjusted to each wine.</p> <p>Aged in barrel on the lees for 18 months (60% new barrels, made at the estate's own cooperage) and only racked once. Duration of ageing was adjusted to each wine.</p>



**Tasting Notes** Château Smith Haut Lafitte Red 2011 offers a clear vibrant intense dark red color. The first nose unveils very refreshing notes of ripe red fruits (cherry, raspberry) and beautiful spicy notes. Swirling reveals the complexity of the nose still led by the fruits and where notes of dry herbs, liquorice, cloves, star anise, smoke, fireplace and a hint of caramel complete the aroma palette.

On the palate, the wine is well-balanced and displays good concentration, matter and maturity. The tannin structure is delicate but firm. The dynamism of this wine emerges from the velvet of the tannins, the ripeness of the fruit, the richness of the matter and brightness and tension of the acidity.

**Cellaring** Drink 2016-2030

**Scores/Awards**

**93 points** - James Molesworth, Wine Spectator - March 31, 2014

**92-95 points** - James Molesworth, Wine Spectator - Web Only 2012

**94+ points** - Robert Parker, Wine Advocate #212 - April 2014

**95-97 points** - Robert Parker, Wine Advocate #200 - April 2012

**92-94 points** - Neal Martin, Wine Journal - May 2012

**94 points** - James Suckling, JamesSuckling.com - January 2014

**92-93 points** - James Suckling, JamesSuckling.com - April 2012

**91-93 points** - Roger Voss, Wine Enthusiast - May 11, 2012

**90-93 points** - Stephen Tanzer, ST's International Wine Cellar - May/June 2012

**16.5 points** - Jancis Robinson, JancisRobinson.com - April 2012 (score only)

**17.5 points** - Julia Harding, JancisRobinson.com - April 2012

**17 points** - Stephen Spurrier, Decanter.com - April 2012

**93++ points** - Jane Anson, The New Bordeaux - April 2012

**15-16 points** - Chris Kissack, The Wine Doctor - April 2012

**92-94 points** - Jeff Leve, thewinecellarinsider.com - April 25, 2012

**92-94+ points** - Jeremy Williams, winewordsandvideotape.com - April 2012

**94 points** - Tim Atkin, MW - timatkin.com - April 2012

**90 points** - Jean Marc Quarin - April 2012 (no review)

**90-93 points** - Derek Smedley, MW - April 2012

**16.5+ points** - Farr Vintner - March 2012

**Review only** - John Berry, Berry & Rudd Wine & Spirit Merchants - April 2012

**90-92 points** - Jeannie Cho Lee MW, asianpalate.com - April 2012

**16.5-17.5 points** - La Revue du Vin France - April 2012

**93 points** - Falstaff Magazine (score only)

**17.5 points** - Gault & Millau (score only)

*"Lush fig, boysenberry and blackberry pâte de fruit notes are interspersed with lively anise, singed apple wood and fruitcake details. A tarry echo hangs in the background on the finish. Shows impressive depth and ripeness for the vintage. Best from 2015 through 2025."*

- JM, Wine Spectator

*"Offers pure, driven plum, cassis and black cherry notes inlaid with graphite and roasted wood spice. Dense without being over extracted. Very sleek. Rock-solid. Score range: 92-95"*

- JM, Wine Spectator

*"The grand vin, the 2011 Smith-Haut-Lafitte is another great successes (and that's saying something after the remarkable duo of 2009 and 2010 as well as the brilliant 2008). This wine exhibits a dense purple color along with a big, sweet nose of creme de cassis, mulberries, licorice and subtle background oak. Full-bodied with silky tannins, nicely integrated acidity, wood and alcohol, a multilayered mouthfeel, and a finish that lasts 45 seconds, this brilliant wine should drink well for 15-20 years.*

*One of the best run estates in Bordeaux, Smith-Haut-Lafitte's owners, the Cathiard family, has produced a beautiful second wine in 2011."*

- RP, Wine Advocate

*"An impressive effort, this 2011 exhibits a dense saturated ruby/purple color along with lots of graphite, black currant and camphor notes, medium to full body, and surprising depth, richness and length. Tannins are present, but they are relatively sweet and unobtrusive. A crisp character gives the wine vibrancy as well as impressive delineation. It should drink well for 15+ years."*

- RP, Wine Advocate

## Reviews

*"The Smith Haut Lafitte is a blend of 55% Cabernet Sauvignon, 36% Merlot and 8% Cabernet Franc aged in 60% new oak. The harvest (for the red) was between 15th September and finishing with the Cabernet Sauvignon and 30th September and it represents 39% of the crop. It has a lifted bouquet with ripe blackberry, cassis, black olive and fruits de mer with fine delineation. With continued aeration there is just a hint of violet. The palate is beautiful, very dense and concentrated with superb delineation and wonderful purity and minerality towards the finish. It is very long in the mouth. Excellent. N.B. This does not include the full vin de presse. Tasted April 2012."*  
- NM, Wine Journal

*"A wine that has a beautiful depth of fruit, with currants, minerals and dried flowers on the nose and palate. It's full-bodied, with super-integrated tannins that last for minutes. This is muscular yet polished. Extremely well done for the vintage. Better in 2017."*  
- JS, JamesSuckling.com

*"Perfumed and very pretty with delicate spices, berries and flowers. Medium to full body, with ultra-fine tannins and a lovely finish. Balanced and delicious. Not a big wine but shows finesse."*  
- JS, JamesSuckling.com

*"91-93. Barrel sample. This wine has density, with very dry, massive tannins. This is a wine for long-term aging; it has a solid texture, with its fruit well buried."*  
- RV, Wine Enthusiast

*"Opaque purple-ruby. Super ripe aromas of blackberry, blackcurrant and graphite. Bright, fresh and juicy, with sneaky concentration to the black fruit and mineral flavors. The finish is long and pure, with enticing notes of minerals and cedar. A more refined Smith Haut Lafitte than usual, very well done."*  
- ST, International Wine Cellar

*"Surprisingly perhaps, this was year in which the red from this stylish property outshone the white. This is quite forward for a 2011, with supple, well-managed tannins, flavours of fruitcake, chocolate and cassis, fine grained tannins and plenty of texture. Like the 2004, this subtle wine will age well. 10+ years."*  
- TA, timatkin.com

*"Well-extracted cassis fruit, slight gamey edge that adds character, firm fruit with a tobacco leaf lift. An elegantly concentrated palate with a good future. Drink 2015-2030"*  
- SS, Decanter.com

*"Classic velvet red, the bishop's robes. Chocolate and coffee on the nose, they are going for their oak toasting in Pessac. Fairly high on the extraction here, highest so far, definitely ambition here, you actually chew through the tannins, which is unusual this year, there is a good three-dimensional effect going on in your mouth. Not drying either. Fruit could be more exuberant, but this is doing its best. 93++"*  
- JA, The New Bordeaux

*"This certainly has one of the most vibrant colours here. Bright fruit, dark and concentrated on the nose, although it borders on robust, with a smoked edge to it that makes me wonder about ripeness and extraction. The palate is supple, dense, creamy and feels very primary still, with a yeasty, whisky-mash element on the palate - just a winemaking hangover. Firm and boldly structured. I sense the fruit has been worked hard here, giving the wine this slightly warm and inky feel. The finish is rather stern though. This is very heavy on the structure at present, in this sample, nevertheless there is promise here."*  
- CK, The Wine Doctor

**Reviews**

*“From an assemblage of 55% Cabernet Sauvignon, 36% Merlot, 8% Cabernet Franc and a drop of Petit Verdot, the wine will be aged in 60% new oak. This is a deep, dark-colored Pessac Leognan with a perfume offering licorice, coffee, earth and jammy black raspberry. Rich, full-bodied, plush and intense, the wine ends with a fresh, long, floral and sweet finish with spice, espresso and black cherry. 92-94 Pts”*

*- JL, thewinecellarinsider.com*

*“Mid depth; glossy; opulent nose – cassis, cherry, blackcurrant – very velvety; open and appealing; good blackcurrant fruit tones with an earthy note plenty of density on the palate with a grippy edge which gives bite to the finish. Pretty good effort overall with nice fruit tones and acidity that reflects the vintage. Drink 2015-2025. 91+ UGC Oct '13 [Earlier note] Mid depth; some purple tones; creamy blackcurrant fruit with some earth, attractive; very polished with nice purity and earthy blackcurrant tones on the palate; nice entry, mid-weight and nicely done; not over handled or over-extracted. Elegant and satiny. Perfectly judged 2011. Harmonious. Head and shoulders best red at the UGC. 92-94+”*

*- JW, winewordsandvideotape.com*

*“The nose is rich deep profound with lots of blackcurrant and black cherry. The richness of the fruit is supported by firm but ripe feeling tannins with layers of flavour giving complexity. There is the feeling of balance length quite streamlined.”*

*- Derek Smedley MW*

*“Daniel and Florence Cathiard transformed this property in the early 1990s and have been making very individual, sexy wines here since then which combine flavours of classic earthy Graves with silky and seductive new oak from barrels produced by their in-house cooper. This is 55% Cabernet Sauvignon, 36% Merlot with the rest Petit Verdot and Cabernet Franc. 50% Tronçais new oak. Only 50% of the total production will go into the grand vin this year. This is refined and delicate - much smoother and silkier than most reds that we tasted in 2011. A lovely cashmere cloak of new oak envelopes the wine with spice and minerals to the fore. A long and creamy finish follows. Lots of plump flesh here. Supple and fine.”*

*- Farr Vintners*

*“A property whose star has really risen in recent years, and a tribute to the unstinting efforts made by owners Daniel and Florence Cathiard to fine-tune their wines. The red wine was very carefully vinified at 26 degrees, lower than usual, to ensure that no excessive extraction of bitter tannins took place. The bouquet is of ripe plummy fruit, while the palate shows hints of spice and abundant red fruit but in a framework of finesse and elegance. A wine where the owners have demonstrated great sensitivity towards the conditions of the vintage.”*

*- JB, Berry & Rudd Wine & Spirit Merchants*

*“Given the vintage, this is a restrained elegant style that is not overdone. The flavours reflect the cool summer and there is little over extraction. Well-made wine with plum and spicy flavours and a fairly long finish.”*

*- JCL, asianpalate.com*

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