

## Château Smith Haut Lafitte Rouge 2012

CSPC# 749551

750mlx12

13.6% alc./vol.

<b>Grape Variety</b>	55% Cabernet Sauvignon, 40% Merlot, 4% Cabernet Franc, 1% Petit Verdot
<b>Appellation</b>	Pessac-Léognan
<b>Classification</b>	Grand Cru Classe
<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-Lafite 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>After a chaotic beginning of the vine cycle: early bud break and blockage in April (cold and wet); the vine found back a proper growing path with the beautiful weather conditions from May to September. However, the delay and heterogeneity undergone because of this difficult start of the vine cycle was to be felt all year long. Once more, the reality of great terroirs, the efforts made in the quest for the balance between the plant and the soil, the vitality of the soils and the low yield reduced greatly these gaps and induced a slow yet complete maturity of the grapes.</p>
<b>Vineyards</b>	<p>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</p>
<b>Harvest</b>	<p>After a first picking day of young vines on the 25th of September, the true harvest started in very good weather conditions on the 4th of October with the Merlots; the juices offered good balances and beautiful aromatic freshness. The weekend of the 6th and 7th of October, with no previous warning sign, a warm and humid depression, of tropical type, troubled our tranquility: mushroom started to be found in the property woods... and botrytis spots appeared.</p> <p>Sure, of the proper maturity of our grapes, we decided to take immediate measures to react to these weather conditions and called in 200 harvesters. The harvest pace doubled, allowing us to qualitatively pick the grapes before they could be affected. Our very selective harvest reception area (de-stemming through vibration, both optical and manual sorting) assured us the perfect quality of the grapes transferred to the vats: no botrytised grape could have passed through this draconian process... Under that sustained pace, harvest finished on the 17th of October with the Cabernet Francs.</p>
<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>



<b>Tasting Notes</b>	Château Smith Haut Lafitte Red 2012 offers a beautiful dark bright red colour with blue hue. The already expressive nose reveals very fresh notes of red fruits (strawberry, cherry) with a hint of smoke. Once aerated, the nose complexity appears with delicate notes of spices (star anise, liquorice, cinnamon), of red fruits as well as beautiful and elegant flower notes. Then the nose stretches out with terroir aromas of flint stone and fireplace. The attack in mouth is fresh and balanced with a fleshy and unctuous texture. The wine is a subtle balance between maturity and freshness: the maturity from the concentration, the impressive unctuousness and sugariness and the beautiful structure of long and classy tannins; the freshness from the tension, the dynamism and the aroma sparkle.
<b>Production</b>	10,000 cases made
<b>Cellaring</b>	Drink 2015-2040
<b>Scores/Awards</b>	<p><b>94 points</b> - James Molesworth, Wine Spectator - March 31, 2015</p> <p><b>91-94 points</b> - James Molesworth, Wine Spectator - Web Only 2013</p> <p><b>95 points</b> - Robert Parker, Wine Advocate #218 - April 2015</p> <p><b>92-94 points</b> - Robert Parker, Wine Advocate #206 - April 2013</p> <p><b>92-94 points</b> - Neal Martin, Wine Journal - May 2013</p> <p><b>94 points</b> - James Suckling, JamesSuckling.com - February 2015</p> <p><b>94-95 points</b> - James Suckling, JamesSuckling.com - April 2013</p> <p><b>94 points</b> - Roger Voss, Wine Enthusiast - May 1, 2015</p> <p><b>92-94 points</b> - Roger Voss, Wine Enthusiast - April 10, 2013</p> <p><b>90-92 points</b> - Stephen Tanzer, ST's International Wine Cellar - May/June 2013</p> <p><b>16.5 points</b> - Jancis Robinson, JancisRobinson.com - April 2013</p> <p><b>17.25 points</b> - Stephen Spurrier, Decanter.com - April 2013</p> <p><b>90 points</b> - Jane Anson, The New Bordeaux - April 2013</p> <p><b>94 points</b> - Tim Atkin, MW - timatkin.com - (score only)</p> <p><b>92 points</b> - Jean Marc - (score only)</p> <p><b>93-96 points</b> - Jeff Leve, thewinecellarinsider.com - April 18, 2013</p> <p><b>90-91 points</b> - Jeremy Williams, winewordsandvideotape.com - April 2013</p> <p><b>90-93 points</b> - Derek Smedley, MW - April 2013</p> <p><b>16.5+ points</b> - Farr Vintner - March 2013</p> <p><b>88 points</b> - Jeannie Cho Lee MW, asianpalate.com - April 2013</p> <p><b>91-93 points</b> - Gilbert &amp; Gaillard - April 16, 2013</p> <p><b>17.5 points</b> - La Revue du Vin France (score only)</p> <p><b>16 points</b> - Vinum Wine Magazine (score only)</p> <p><b>91-93 points</b> - Falstaff Magazine (score only)</p> <p><b>17.5 points</b> - Gault &amp; Millau (score only)</p>
<b>Reviews</b>	<p><i>"Layered fig, boysenberry and blackberry pâte de fruit notes are buttressed by ample, yet polished and integrated, ganache-coated tannins, while accents of black tea, ganache and tar course underneath. A really gorgeous display of fruit, showing terroir and cut on the finish. Best from 2018 through 2027. 10,000 cases made."</i></p> <p>- JM, Wine Spectator</p> <p><i>"Dark, with a ganache frame to the black currant, plum and blackberry notes. Tarry finish is rather shut and stolid today, but there's serious stuffing here. Long charcoal echo, too. Score range: 91-94"</i></p> <p>- JM, Wine Spectator</p> <p><i>"The opaque bluish-purple 2012 Smith Haut Lafite offers up notes of licorice, graphite, blueberry and blackberry fruit, a medium to full-bodied mouthfeel, stunningly ripe, velvety tannins and a long, long finish. This is another sensational effort from the Cathiards that is perfectly balanced, complex, super-rich and pure. Drink it over the next 20-25 years.</i></p> <p><i>This is another great turn-around effort that dated from the acquisition of this once moribund estate in 1990, by Daniel and Florence Cathiard. They continue to do an exemplary job with both white and red"</i></p> <p>- RP, Wine Advocate</p>

## Reviews

*"A brilliant success again, this blend of 55% Cabernet Sauvignon, 40% Merlot, 4% Cabernet Franc and 1% Petit Verdot is a medium-bodied, impressively concentrated wine with copious quantities of red and black fruits. Licorice, roasted herbs and a touch of background oak are present in this slightly precocious wine, which should be accessible when released. It has the depth to evolve for 20 or more years. Talk about a severe selection – only 41% made it into the grand vin!"*

- RP, Wine Advocate

*"Tasted from a barrel sample at en primeur. The 2012 is a blend of 55% Cabernet Sauvignon, 40% Merlot, 4% Cabernet Franc and 1% Petit Verdot that is being raised in 60% new barrels. It has an intense bouquet, very lifted with the Merlot lending it a very floral aspect. Touches of creme de cassis develop with time. The palate is very well balanced with a smooth texture although you can feel the tannins exert their influence on the structured, much more Left Bank style finish that leaves a tertiary/tobacco aftertaste. This might be a long-term SHL. Tasted April 2013."*

- NM, Wine Journal

*"This is very deep and sensual for the vintage with blackberry, tobacco, chocolate, coffee and spice character. Full body, super-integrated tannins and a long, long finish. Superb for the vintage. Give it three or four years to come around but already gorgeous"*

- JS, JamesSuckling.com

*"The finish is gorgeous here with a crunchy, fruity, hazelnut and earthy character. Dense yet balanced with a beautiful texture and length. Creamy tannins. Superb for the vintage. 55% Cabernet Sauvignon, 40% Merlot, 4% Cabernet Franc, and 1% Petit Verdot"*

- JS, JamesSuckling.com

*"This dark and dense wine is closed, with its tannins very dominant. It's a solid, dark wine intense with juicy acidity, firm dry structure and a rich core. This is a magnificent wine for serious aging, with all the elements coming strongly into play. Drink from 2022."*

- RV, Wine Enthusiast

*"92–94. Barrel sample. Dark, extracted and dense, this is a hard-edged wine that initially lacks fruitiness. Only as the wine develops does it show its powerful density and hints of juiciness."*

- RV, Wine Enthusiast

*"Purple-ruby. Enticing aromas of blackcurrant, tobacco, violet and herbs. Creamy-sweet and rather powerful on entry, then brighter in the mid-palate, with lively acidity energizing dark fruit, floral and tobacco flavors. This is densely packed for a 2012, but also has a degree of finesse I haven't found in some past, bigger vintages of this wine. Finishes with building, smooth tannins and terrific persistence. A very strong vintage for this wine; this is yet another example of an estate that lowered the proportion of Cabernet Sauvignon in its 2012 blend (normally it's 60% to 65%)."*

- ST, International Wine Cellar

*"Dark purple. Appetising fresh forest-floor nose. Very sweet palate entry but there is freshness here too. Just a little skinny and astringent on the finish but this is attractive modern red Bordeaux without overkill of either oak or alcohol. Very competent."*

- JR, JancisRobinson.com

*"Elegantly concentrated cassis fruit with tobacco leaf overtones, habitual Smith seductively smooth and spicy, will show early and last well."*

- SS, Decanter.com

## Reviews

*“Rich, dark purple, not as vibrant as some, but still a beautifully perky colour. Again, a smart level of extraction, the amount of tannins in the grape skins has been well controlled. Good fleshy fruit, and a beautiful polish. This is a very good wine, and I was pleased after the tasting to see it was Smith Haut Lafitte. It’s not for me as good as their white this year, which was easily one of my favourites in the tasting, but it’s another success for the team. 90 / 17. Highly recommended. Drink 2018-2026.”*

- JA, The New Bordeaux

*“As it did in 2011, the increasingly impressive red from this top Pessac-Léognan property outperformed the more famous white. This is a serious yet very stylish red, combining perfume with medium weight fruit, smoky oak with nuanced, refined tannins. Long and complex with notes of violets, graphite and cassis. Drink: 2020-35”*

- TA, timatkin.com

*“From 55% Cabernet Sauvignon, 40% Merlot, 4% Cabernet Franc and 1% Petit Verdot, the wine reached 13.6% alcohol with a pH of 3.7 and will be aged in 60% new French oak for between 16 to 18 months. Deep in color with a smoky nose complicated by licorice, coffee, dark cherry and earthy aromas, the wine is fat, lush and dense. Supple tannins and fresh, round dark fruits create a long, rich, opulent finish. The Grand Vin represents about 50% of the harvest. 93-96 Pts (18-Apr-2013)”*

- JL, thewinecellarinsider.com

*“Deep and dark; creamy, deep and layered on the nose; attractive; very full; and textured on the palate with layers of fruit; quite firm tannins and nice bite at the end. Good freshness. Excellent effort. 55% Cabernet Sauvignon, 40% Merlot, 4% Cabernet Franc, 1% Petit Verdot. 92-93+ Tasted Monday April 8, 2013 Pessac-Léognan tasting at Chateau Olivier. [Later note] Deep and saturated; some nutty oak, little reminiscent of Domaine de Chevalier; red fruits alongside some black cherry; chewy palate with just a little angularity to the tannin; lots of plushness from the Merlot disguises the slight astringency of the Cabernet. 90-91+ Tasted Wednesday April 10, 2013 at UGC”*

- JW, winewordsandvideotape.com

*“There are a lot of rich flavours on the nose blackcurrant and black cherry backed by fresher bramble. The fruit feels ripe the sweetness filling out the mid palate and although the tannins are firm there is lots of ripe fruit underneath. The finish has an attractive brightness. 2020-35.”*

- Derek Smedley MW

*“Daniel and Florence Cathiard transformed this property in the early 1990s and have been making very individual, sexy wines since then which combine flavours of classic earthy Graves with silky and seductive new oak from barrels produced by their in-house cooper. Plush with a creamy nose of cherry, cassis, toasted brioche and cedary spice. This has a smoky, flinty, real Graves character. Big and rich on the palate with good intensity and richness. Modern, quite powerful yet elegant and fresh. Soft, smooth and creamy-textured. Very refined.”*

- Farr Vintners

*“Soft, succulent red with firm tannins and an array of spicy, dark berry fruit flavours. Well composed red that is balanced and charming in this challenging vintage. Good depth and fairly long length. Tasted in Bordeaux, France. Maturity: Young. (06-Apr-2013)”*

- JCL, asianpalate.com

*“Expressive nose with predominant toasted oak aromas. Fruit is more backward. Supple palate with polished tannins and finesse yet fruit still a little reticent. (16-Apr-2013)”*

- en.gilbertgaillard.com

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