

Château Smith Haut Lafitte Rouge 2016

CSPC# 852073

750mlx12

13.75% alc./vol.

CSPC# 866066

750mlx6

13.75% alc./vol.

Grape Variety

65% Cabernet Sauvignon, 30% Merlot, 4% Cabernet Franc, 2% Petit Verdot.

Appellation

Pessac-Léognan

Classification

Grand Cru Classé

Website

<http://www.smith-haut-lafitte.com/en/smith-haut-lafitte-vin-rouge.html>

General Info

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.

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.

Winemaker

Fabien Teitgen

Vintage

The unquestionably successful 2016 vintage is due to the conjunction of several important factors.

A rainy period lasting from the 1st of January to the 20th of June replenished water reserves and paved the way for a large potential crop. The significant precipitation between January and late June enhanced vine growth in spring and built-up essential water reserves in our gravelly well-drained soil. Quasi-miraculous flowering guaranteed a large crop. A window of opportunity – a spell of splendid weather from the 4th to the 11th of June – miraculously opened in the context of a "spring monsoon". This led to perfectly fertilized flowers producing well-formed, sizeable bunches. An exceptionally dry period from the 1st of July to the 13th of September was conducive to richness and power.

Summer was warm, but not excessively so, and also extremely dry. In fact, this was one of the driest summers in a hundred years... In early summer, our deeply rooted old vines were fortunately able to draw on water reserves accumulated in spring. The month of August was ideal for developing tannic structure in our red wine varieties and sugar levels in the white wine ones. However, these drought conditions were very trying for our young vines with relatively shallow roots. This necessitated the highly unusual step of watering them.

We were really in need of rain by early September! This finally arrived, on the 13th of that month. These 40 mm of rain did a world of good, giving a boost to ripening and refreshing the vines. An Indian summer from the 15th of September to the end of October provided finesse and elegance. The Indian summer, combined with diurnal temperature differences due to cool night-time temperatures, ensured a good end to ripening of the various grape varieties, as well as refined red wine tannins, while maintaining fresh fruitiness.

Vineyards

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

Harvest

The harvest took place from September 22 to October 12 and the Grand Vin represents just 40% of the harvest.



Vinification/ Maturation	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.
Tasting Notes	Dark ruby color; red currant, olive, nutmeg nose; silky textured, cassis, red currant palate with good balancing acidity; medium-plus finish.
Serve with	Chateau Smith Haut Lafitte is best served at 15.5 degrees Celsius, 60 degrees Fahrenheit. The cool, almost cellar temperature gives the wine more freshness and lift. Chateau Smith Haut Lafitte is best served with all types of classic meat dishes, veal, pork, beef, lamb, duck, game, roast chicken, roasted, braised, and grilled dishes. Chateau Smith Haut Lafitte is also good with Asian dishes, hearty fish courses like tuna, mushrooms, and pasta.
Production	8,333 cases made
Cellaring	Drink 2023-2046
Scores/Awards	<p>97 points - James Molesworth, Wine Spectator - March 2019</p> <p>95-98 points - James Molesworth, Wine Spectator - Web Only 2017</p> <p>98 points - Lisa Perrotti-Brown, Wine Advocate Interim Issue - November 2018</p> <p>96-98 points - Neal Martin, Wine Advocate #230 - April 2017</p> <p>97 points - James Suckling, JamesSuckling.com - February 2019</p> <p>97-98 points - James Suckling, JamesSuckling.com - March 2017</p> <p>96-98 points - Roger Voss, Wine Enthusiast - April 2017</p> <p>18 points - Julia Harding, JancisRobinson.com - October 2018</p> <p>17.5 points - Jancis Robinson, JancisRobinson.com - April 2017</p> <p>98 points - Jane Anson, Decanter.com - December 2018</p> <p>97 points - Jane Anson, Decanter.com - April 2017</p> <p>99 points - Jeff Leve, thewinecellarinsider.com - February 2019</p> <p>98 points - Jeff Leve, thewinecellarinsider.com - May 2018</p> <p>97 points - Jeff Leve, thewinecellarinsider.com - April 2017</p> <p>95 points - Tim Atkin, MW - timatkin.com - April 2017</p> <p>16.5 points - Farr Vintner - February 2017</p> <p>90-94 points - Derek Smedley, MW - April 2017</p> <p>97 points - Neal Martin, Vinous - January 2019</p> <p>98 points - Antonio Galloni, Vinous - January 2019</p> <p>94-97 points - Antonio Galloni, Vinous - April 2017</p> <p>97 points - Jeb Dunnuck MW - February 2019</p>
Reviews	<p><i>"Quite ripe, with lush waves of cassis, cherry preserve and raspberry puree flavors gliding through in no hurry but maintaining definition and cut along the way as bramble, tar and melted licorice snap notes slowly emerge throughout. The finish features an intense echo of pastis and sweet tobacco, showing serious latent grip. Best from 2023 through 2038. 8,333 cases made."</i></p> <p>- JM, Wine Spectator</p> <p><i>"Seductively fleshy and creamy in feel, with alluring dark plum and fig notes laced with singed bay, black tea and dark earth hints. The broad finish has the grip and cut for definition. A beautiful wine in the making. Score range: 95-98"</i></p> <p>- JM, Wine Spectator</p> <p><i>"Composed of 65% Cabernet Sauvignon, 30% Merlot, 4% Cabernet Franc and 1% Petit Verdot and matured in 60% new oak for 18 months, the 2016 Smith Haut Lafitte has a very deep garnet-purple color, opening with sensuous scents of warm black cherries, blackberry pie, star anise and fragrant lilacs with hints of chocolate box, cigar box and pencil lead plus wafts of truffles and crushed rocks. Medium to full-bodied, rich and seductive, it completely fills the palate with perfumed black berry preserves and superbly plush tannins, finishing epically long and beautifully layered."</i></p> <p>- LPB, Wine Advocate</p> <p><i>"The 2016 Smith-Haut-Lafitte is a blend of 65% Cabernet Sauvignon, 30% Merlot, 4% Cabernet Franc and 1% Petit Verdot that was picked between 29 September and 19 October at 35 hectoliters per hectare. It is being matured in 60% new oak for a total of 18 months. "We have never been so proud of our Cabernet Sauvignon," winemaker Fabien Tietgen told me. Now, this has a much subtler bouquet than recent vintages, you could</i></p>

Reviews *argue, more intellectual than the 2015 Smith-Haut-Lafitte. First there are aromas of blackberry, briary and just a hint of iodine, then underneath that, marine-like aromas such as freshly shucked oyster shells, pressed flowers and a touch of brown spice. There is wonderful delineation here. The palate is medium-bodied with plenty of tightly-wound black fruit, intermingling with smoke, black pepper, spice box and a touch of bay leaf. This is an extremely precise Smith-Haut-Lafitte, certainly a cerebral 2016 that might well be approachable young yet will certainly age in consummate style. The château's own tasting note reads "What more could one possibly want from a wine?" The answer to that is: "Another bottle."*

- NM, Wine Advocate

"The blackcurrant and blueberry aromas are lifted and beautiful. Lots of flowers, too, together with some mushroom and dried-flower undertones. Full-bodied with firm and very silky tannins giving a lovely texture. Bright acidity lifts the finish and gives it drive and force. Better after 2025."

- JS, JamesSuckling.com

"Wow. This is incredibly rich and exotic. Full-bodied, so deep and long. It lasts for minutes. Perfectly polished tannins evidence how texturally focused and supple this is. Decadent and enticing. From organically grown grapes. Super quality of cabernet is on show here. We will see if 2016 is better than 2015."

- JS, JamesSuckling.com

"With its dense structure, superb acidity and black currant fruits, this is a great wine from the estate owned by Daniel and Florence Cathiard. A majority old-vine Cabernet Sauvignon (with Merlot, Cabernet Franc and Petit Verdot) gives the wine the concentration it needs to mature slowly. This elegant wine will be ready to drink after 2032. (RV)"

- RV, Wine Enthusiast

"Dark crimson with purple rim. The first sniff makes me smile. So inviting in its dusty, pure-fruited fragrance. Fragrant with anticipated pleasure. Exceptional tannic finesse giving an elegant structure for the fresh, lively fruit. Dry, like layers of fine paper. Long and embryonic but all in perfect harmony. Stunning. (JH)"

- JH, JancisRobinson.com

"Blackish crimson. Nose that manages to combine flesh and ripeness with freshness. Some restraint here and some very natural flavours. A quiet king. Great appetising wine with the ripeness of the vintage. Very classy."

- JR, JancisRobinson.com

"A brilliant wine, one of the best ever at this property. Straight from the first nose you feel an added dimension and aromatic complexity to this bottle. The diversity of flavours tumbles out on the attack, from brambled autumnal fruits to tighter, fresher black cherry and cassis notes. The body is deeply coloured, full of life and pleasure, with rich, deep cassis and high but generous alcohol that's not intrusive but showing through in the smooth texture. It was great En primeur and is even better today. 1% Petit Verdot finishes the blend."

- JA, Decanter.com

"This is gorgeous, extremely ripe, tight, fresh and rich. It has clear, deep tannins and a thrilling tension that slices right through the ripe, autumnal fruit and teases out the finish. There are true layers to the wine, with flavours of cassis, liquorice and charcoal, demonstrating a reserved power that keeps on delivering. The tannin count is at a full 100IPT, a touch higher than in 2010 but they just float along, offering the perfect resistance and interest in your mouth. Technical director Fabien Teitgen used 10% stems in the vinification for 2016, utilising organic winemaking methods. Aged in 60% new oak barrels. 3.6pH. (JA)"

- JA, Decanter.com

"This is a strong candidate for the best wine yet produced by the Cathiard family at Smith Haut Lafitte. The inky color lets you know this is going to be packed and stacked with layers of ripe fruit. But there is more going on here than concentration. Dense, yet light on its feet, the fruit displays a level of purity not seen here before. The oak is better integrated and velvet and silky texture is a complete turn on Everything is in balance and harmony here."

- JL, thewinecellarinsider.com

Reviews

"This just keeps getting better and better. Intensity, power, concentration, lush, soft, polished tannins and a finish that sticks with you for about 50 seconds, letting you delve into its dark, ripe, smoky fruits, licorice, earth, espresso nose and cashmere tannins. Is this the best vintage of Smith Haut Lafitte? Maybe. Regardless, it is going to give the 2009 and 2010 a run for the money."

- JL, thewinecellarinsider.com

"With a good depth of color, the wine is almost opaque with dark purple accents. Espresso, smoke, black fruits, wet earth, licorice, truffle and dark chocolate come right out, when asked. Full bodied, fat and opulent, with serious density, length, character and tannins. The tannins are ripe, but this is going to need time in the cellar, even with all the ripe, supple fruits."

- JL, thewinecellarinsider.com

"There was a lot of selection for the Grand Vin this year, which was down to 35% of the production, and it has paid off by giving the wine an extra level of complexity. Sappy, fine and well balanced, with subtle cassis and fresh tobacco flavours and the tannic backbone to age further in bottle. 2024-34"

- TA, timatkin.com

"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. Plump black cherry fruit and sweet smoke provide an open, attractively perfumed nose here with a touch of incense. The palate is smooth, silky and hedonistic with really refined tannins providing a velveteen texture. This carries plush and smooth blue fruits and sweet vanilla through to a long, pure, and plush finish."

- Farr Vintners

"Concentrated rich fruit the palate has sweet ripe cassis and black cherry dark chocolate in the middle depth of flavour. Fresher at the back the tannins fine and integrated the finish has depth of flavour sweet fruit. 2026-40"

- Derek Smedley MW

"The 2016 Smith Haut Lafitte has a more discreet bouquet than I expected, and it takes a couple of minutes to open in the glass, revealing blackberry, briar, a touch of pressed iris and a wet limestone aroma. There is less tobacco than I expected, and a stonier style. The palate is medium-bodied with very fine tannin, perhaps the finest I've encountered in 20 years of visiting this estate. Very feminine and beautifully structured, and the 60% new oak is seamlessly assimilated. Extremely impressive and beguiling. This will be an irresistible Smith Haut Lafitte that gives 30 to 40 years of drinking pleasure."

- NM, Vinous

"The 2016 Smith Haut Lafitte is flat out stunning. Rich, ample and explosive, the 2016 possesses tremendous energy and tension to play off the wine's dark, rich fruit. I am not sure I have ever tasted a young Smith Haut Lafitte with such extraordinary balance. In 2016, the Grand Vin is tense and pulsing with energy. Hints of lavender, spice, menthol and crème de cassis open up in the glass, but the 2016 stands out for its feel and exceptional harmony. The combined effects of picking a bit early, vinifying more gently and reducing the impact of oak are having a profound effect at Smith Haut Lafitte. Thinking of some of the highly regarded wines of the last decade here, the 2009 and 2010 in particular, well, the 2016 is on another level."

- AG, Vinous

"The 2016 Smith Haut Lafitte is fabulous. Subtle, nuanced and classy, it speaks to finesse more than power. All the elements fall into place effortlessly. Gracious and light on its feet, the 2016 possesses exceptional balance and class, with captivating freshness and energy that gives lift to the dark red/purplish-hued fruit. There is much to like here."

- AG, Vinous

"It's undeniably a more elegant, reserved style from this estate, yet it still offers full-bodied richness and depth, with a classic perfume of cassis, black currants, cold fireplace, wood smoke, and tobacco. Deep, nicely concentrated, seamless, and, again, incredibly elegant, it's going to flesh out nicely with short-term cellaring and keep for 20-30 years."

- Jeb Dunnuck
