

# Château Smith Haut Lafitte 2019

CSPC# 866066

750mlx6

14.2% alc./vol.

**Grape Variety**  
**Appellation**  
**Classification**  
**Website**  
**Sustainability**

59% Cabernet Sauvignon, 36% Merlot, 4% Cabernet Franc, 1% Petit Verdot  
Pessac-Léognan  
Grand Cru Classé

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

Certified organic with the 2019 vintage, this year marks a waypoint—rather than a stopping point—in Smith Haut Lafitte's agronomic journey. The Cathiard family banished herbicides at this address in 1991, radically reducing chemical treatments and suffering the consequences for several years in the form of much diminished yields (today, happily, materiel and techniques are more sophisticated). In addition to organic methods, cover crops have been deployed on the vineyard's central blocks and western band, where soils are less well drained. Hedges have been planted to encourage biodiversity, and ultraviolet treatments are being trialed as an alternative to copper sulfate. In addition to such initiatives, the technical team is adapting to a warmer climate: that means picking a touch earlier, certainly, but more importantly, adapting in the vineyards, with somewhat lower canopies and an end to deleafing to retain fresh, vibrant flavors. Winemaking, too, is a little gentler: cool but protracted macerations, with periodic punch-downs, for reds and whole-cluster pressing with an inverted press for whites. This has brought new structural elegance and energy to the estate's wines. It surely helps that as much as possible is done in-house: since 1995, the Cathiards have their own nursery for their own massale selections, in partnership with Bérillon, and barrels are made in the chateau's own on-site cooperage too, favoring the forests of Tronçais and Jupilles for reds, Loches (which brings tension) for whites. All this is symptomatic of the attention to detail and seriousness that the Cathiards, and their technical director Fabien Teitgen, have brought to this estate; and the result, in 2019, is one of the finest wines they've produced to date."

## 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 Vintage

Fabien Teitgen

The 2019 vintage witnessed two ripening phases. The first took place in hot, dry conditions, resulting in small, concentrated grapes with rich tannins. The second occurred in cooler and slightly wetter conditions, leading to gentle ripening, thus preserving freshness and softening tannins. The Merlots have great substance and power, while the Cabernets contribute length and freshness. This wine is a very dark red, almost black colour. The bouquet is expressive, with black fruit notes (blackberry, blackcurrant, blueberry) accompanied by cherry overtones. Complex spicy aromas then come to the fore (clove, cinnamon, liquorice), underscored by subtle hints of gun flint, very emblematic of the Graves terroir.

A rather "approachable" wine, powerful, broad-based, and concentrated with a smooth texture that caresses the palate. The mid-palate is full-bodied and equally concentrated, paving the way for a lovely long aftertaste. A decidedly delicious and lively wine combining power, concentration, and smoothness! The aftertaste is very



<b>Vintage</b>	long, showcasing great complexity where spices and empyreumatic notes typical of the terroir nicely balance out fruity overtones.
<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>	The harvest took place September 23 through October 10. Yields were 38 hectoliters per hectare with the grand vin produced from only 40% of the harvest."
<b>Vinification/ Maturation</b>	Whole grapes are fermented at 28°C in small wooden vats with extraction by manual punching down. Aged 18 months in barrels (60% are new barrels produced in our in-house cooperage), with aging on lees. After being racked a single time, wine is aged according to its profile.
<b>Tasting Notes</b>	Dense, sweet Cabernet-cassis and gentle gravel background, subtle and persistent; full-bodied, nicely concentrated, fresh in acidity, very fine in tannin; despite its ample alcohol, the impressions here are elegant, restrained, classically Graves in proportions; freshly ripe in flavor, aromatic and refined, nothing "strong" or particularly concentrated, and with a pure, refined and very Graves character; long to taste, clearly marked by its gravel aromas, finishing with an appetizing freshness and a very nice, fruit-cored length. A lovely, <i>mezzo-for</i> te rendering, not grand, but complete and very good. Its overall fineness of tannin texture is likely to make it
<b>Tasting Notes</b>	accessible relatively early
<b>Serve with</b>	Best served at 15.5 degrees Celsius. The cool, almost cellar temperature gives the wine more freshness and lift. Best served with all types of classic meat dishes, veal, pork, beef, lamb, duck, game, roast chicken, roasted, braised, and grilled dishes.
<b>Production</b>	10,000 cases made
<b>Cellaring</b>	Drink 2024-2036
<b>Scores/Awards</b>	<p><b>95 points</b> - James Molesworth, Wine Spectator - March 2022</p> <p><b>96 points</b> - William Kelley, Wine Advocate - April 2022</p> <p><b>96-98+ points</b> - Lisa Perrotti-Brown, Wine Advocate - June 2020</p> <p><b>99 points</b> - Lisa Perrotti-Brown, The Wine Independent - March 2022</p> <p><b>99 points</b> - James Suckling, JamesSuckling.com - February 2022</p> <p><b>96-97 points</b> - James Suckling, JamesSuckling.com - May 2020</p> <p><b>96-98 points</b> - Roger Voss, Wine Enthusiast - June 2020</p> <p><b>17.5 points</b> - Julia Harding, JancisRobinson.com - December 2021</p> <p><b>97 points</b> - Jane Anson, Decanter.com - June 2020</p> <p><b>99 points</b> - Jane Anson, Insidebordeaux.com - January 2022</p> <p><b>98 points</b> - Jeff Leve, thewinecellarinsider.com - March 2022</p> <p><b>96-98 points</b> - Jeff Leve, thewinecellarinsider.com - June 2020</p> <p><b>94-96 points</b> - Farr Vintners - May 2020</p> <p><b>97 points</b> - Neal Martin, Vinous - February 2022</p> <p><b>96-98 points</b> - Neal Martin, Vinous - June 2020</p> <p><b>96 points</b> - Antonio Galloni, Vinous - February 2022</p> <p><b>94-96 points</b> - Antonio Galloni, Vinous - June 2020</p> <p><b>98 points</b> - Jeb Dunnuck MW - April 2022</p> <p><b>95-97 points</b> - Jeb Dunnuck MW - June 2020</p> <p><b>95 points</b> - Jean Marc Quarin (score only) - January 2020</p> <p><b>96 points</b> - Thomas Parker MW - March 2022</p> <p><b>97 points</b> - Peter Moser, Falstaff Magazine - June 2020</p> <p><b>95-96 points</b> - Vert de Vin - April 2020</p> <p><b>17.5 points</b> - La Revue du Vin France (score only) - January 2022</p> <p><b>96-97 points</b> - Bettane &amp; Desseauve (score only) - July 2020</p> <p><b>18 points</b> - Vinum Wine Magazine (score only) - September 2020</p>
<b>Reviews</b>	<p><i>"A broad, rich, and caressing wine, with a lovely display of cassis, plum puree, and blackberry pâte de fruit notes. There's form thanks to a buried alder note, along with sweet tobacco and iron accents on the finish. A strong showing. Best from 2024 through 2036. 10,000 cases made."</i></p> <p>- JM, Wine Spectator</p> <p><i>"The 2019 Smith Haut Lafitte has turned out very well indeed, unwinding in the glass with a complex bouquet of dark berries, cassis, forest floor, pencil shavings, licorice, and spices. Full-bodied, broad, and velvety, it's layered and elegantly muscular, underpinned by rich structuring tannins and lively acids, and it concludes with a long, expansive finish. This is another estate where the viticultural and stylistic evolutions of the last decade have delivered a beautifully balanced, harmonious 2019."</i></p> <p>- WK, Wine Advocate</p>

## Reviews

*"The blend this year is 59% Cabernet Sauvignon, 36% Merlot, 4% Cabernet Franc and 1% Petit Verdot, harvested from the 17th of September to the 10th of October. The wine is aging in French oak barriques, 60% new. Deep garnet-purple colored, the 2019 Smith Haut Lafitte is downright hedonic on the nose, rolling sensuously out of the glass with notions of warm cassis, chocolate-covered cherries, Black Forest cake and black raspberries with nuances of cinnamon toast, lilacs, camphor, and iron ore. Medium to full-bodied, the palate juxtaposes remarkable energy and brightness with densely packed, rich, ripe black fruits, framed by wonderfully ripe, finely grained tannins and fantastically invigorating freshness, finishing long with mineral-tinged fireworks. Stunning!*

*It is difficult in Bordeaux to have both high acidity and good ripeness," began Château Smith Haut Lafitte's technical director, Fabien Teitgen. "But this year you have both. Cool nights preserved the acidity nicely. Overall, 2019 was cooler than in 2018. We have the impression that 2019 was hot, but it was generally cooler. The wines are fresher and brighter. 2018 is powerful, but 2019 has intensity." As an organic grower, Smith Haut Lafitte was one of the châteaux that got hit hard in 2018 with the mildew. "In 2018, we lost half the crop," Teitgen confessed. "In 2019, we had no problems, in fact. The yields were normal for us." "We have the opposition of two weather systems during the growing season," he went on to say. "The first part—June / July—was warm and dry. Our young vines had a bit of water stress at the end of July. Then in August and September, we had cooler temperatures. At the beginning of August, I had a map of the vineyard showing the depth of the roots. It was clear that the old vines with deep roots did much better." Technically speaking, Teitgen noted that the acids were a bit higher in 2019. "The quantity of tannins is very similar to 2018," he said. "But the texture is different. We had a strong synthesis of tannins, small berries—no need to extract too much, just wait with the infusion." Smith Haut Lafitte's 2019 red may not have quite the same "wow" factor as the 2018, but I suspect that because of its increased freshness and slightly brighter style, there are many consumers who will actually prefer the 2019. The 2019 SHL Blanc is another story though—wow-o-WOW that is good!"*  
- LPB, Wine Advocate

*"The 2019 Smith Haut Lafitte Rouge comes from terroir composed of 60% gravel and 40% clay and is a blend of around 2/3 Cabernet Sauvignon and 1/3 Merlot with a splash of Cabernet Franc. Deep garnet-purple colored, it needs considerable swirling to unlock notes of blackcurrant preserves, stewed plums, and juicy blackberries, with hints of candied violets, licorice, espresso, and tapenade, plus wafts of crushed rocks and wood smoke. Full-bodied, rich, and opulent in the mouth, it has very firm, super-ripe, fine-grained tannins and bold freshness to support the voluptuous, mineral-accented fruit, finishing very long and achingly perfumed."*  
- LPB, Wine Independent

*"Intense blackberry and graphite character coming out of the glass, together with dried violets, ink, and some asphalt. Full-bodied with wonderfully integrated tannins that spread across the palate and then draw you deep into the wine. Lead-pencil and blackcurrant aftertaste. Tightly wound with a cashmere-like texture. A whole and thought-provoking wine. Try after 2028 and beyond."*  
- JS, JamesSuckling.com

*"This is a solid red with a compact, tight palate of black fruit and currants, as well as very pretty, powerful yet polished tannins. This shows finesse with structure."*  
- JS, JamesSuckling.com

*"In a line of great white wines from this estate, here is a superb vintage. It has all the richness of ripe fruit, but that has been channeled into structure, density as well as intense acidity and freshness. All the signs are this wine will age for a long, long time."*  
- RV, Wine Enthusiast

*"Black almost to the rim. Smells dark, rich, and inviting. Intense, pure cassis. Just a touch of oaky sweetness and char. Deep, dense, full, and yet fresh. The tannins are quite thick at the moment, but they are smooth and polished for a long life. Notable freshness even with all this depth of fruit and firm structure. Great balance already. Long, too."*  
- JH, JancisRobinson.com

## Reviews

*"The aromatics are highly seductive, the texture silky and round, tannins relatively soft as they were in 2018, but lots of them, layering up one on top of the next. Violet rim around the edge, all the signs of an excellent quality En Primeur sample are here. Not quite as lush as the 2018, a little more like the 2016 in structure at this stage, boding well for the future. Refined in style with cassis and blueberry - good focus and concentration. Tasted twice, three weeks apart, and both times seriously impressive. 60% new oak, 1% Petit Verdot completes the blend."*

- JA, Decanter.com

*"Sumptuous, seductive, and extremely poised. This inches forward with layers of bitter chocolate, smoked caramel, liquorice root, fresh mint leaf, rosebud, and black truffle. Behind all this sits caressing, slate-filled tannins that give real grip to the palate. Within 15 minutes of opening, you feel even more volume in the mid palate, before things close in towards a mouthwatering salinity on the finish. Shows why Le Petit Smith Haut-Lafitte is so exceptional in this vintage. Full of signature Smith Haut Lafitte gloss, but this is also a serious wine that will reward ageing."*

- JA, Inside Bordeaux

*"Almost opaque in color, the nose grabs your focus with your first swirl and sniff due to all the blackberries, smoke, black cherry, espresso, wet earth, cocoa, and flowers. On the palate, the wine is already expressive. Voluptuous, seductive, silky fresh and rich, the layers of fruit coat your palate, leaving you with a sensuous finish packed with waves of dark red fruits that linger and expand. The wine is so good now, we drank the bottle for dinner knowing that over the next 2-3 decades, the wine is going to get better and better. Drink from 2025-2055."*

- JL, thewinecellarinsider.com

*"Quite deep in color, the initial nuances of chocolate mint, flowers, spice, incense, espresso and smoky red fruits fills your nose and glass. On the palate, the wine is fleshy, seductive, soft and loaded with dark sweet fruits. Expansive, silky, and long, the layers of sweet fruits linger in the finish. The fruit shows a beautiful purity and sensuous quality in the fruits. The wine ...reaching 14.2% alcohol with a pH of 3.7."*

- JL, thewinecellarinsider.com

*"Smith Haut Lafitte was certified organic in 2019 and are also practicing biodynamically. The wine will be aged in 60% new French oak. Deep ruby in colour with a sappy, smoky nose of cedar, incense, and dark cherries. The palate is opulent and glossy, with generous levels of sweet vanilla, wood char and tobacco interlaced with fleshy black fruits and milk chocolate. The tannins are bold and build on the finish, tempering the sweet wood and ripe fruit. Long and heady."*

- Farr Vintners

*"The 2019 Smith Haut-Lafitte blossoms immediately on the nose of seductive blackberry, black olive, and Bing cherries, perhaps a little more floral than when I tasted it from barrel, and there is a nearly Burgundy-like purity. The palate is medium-bodied with a smooth, almost creamy entry. This is very harmonious, elegant, and poised, leading to a mineral-driven finish. A gorgeous, seductive Smith Haut Lafitte that will give three or four decades of drinking pleasure."*

- NM, Vinous

*"The 2019 Smith Haut-Lafitte was cropped at 36hl/ha, undergoing manual pigeage and maturation in 60% new barrels for a planned 18 months. It has an intense, very pure bouquet with blackberry, briary and cherry compote, and a hint of black olive tapenade in the background. The palate is medium-bodied with fine grain tannins that frame the pure, mineral-infused black fruit. Undercurrents of graphite and black olive surface towards the complex finish that I feel is less opulent but maybe more sophisticated than recent vintages of this top performer. Very elegant and refined, this is an outstanding success for winemaker Fabien Teitgen and his team. Tasted twice including samples direct from the château."*

- NM, Vinous

*"The 2019 Smith Haut Lafitte is a dense, explosive wine. Super-ripe dark cherry, plum, mocha, new leather and licorice all saturate the palate in a wine that balances unctuous texture and structure. The 2019 is an opulent Smith Haut Lafitte that is going to need a few years to shed some baby fat. It is a powerhouse to be sure. Dried herbs, leather, tobacco, incense, and graphite lend striking savory nuance throughout."*

- AG, Vinous

## Reviews

*"The 2019 Smith Haut Lafitte soars out of the glass with regal intensity and stature. A wine of depth and textural resonance, the 2019 has a lot to offer. Naturally, today the 2019 is about potential more than anything else, and yet all the elements are so impeccably balanced. Dark and racy, with real energy, the 2019 is impressive. Lavender, mint, and sage linger on the persistent finish."*

- AG, Vinous

*"Reminding me a little of the 2009, the 2019 Château Smith Haut Lafitte has a rich, powerful style in its cassis, blueberry, and black raspberry fruit as well as its chalky minerality, smoked earth, tobacco, and lead pencil shaving-like aromas and flavors. A blend of 59% Cabernet Sauvignon, 36% Merlot, 4% Cabernet Franc, and the rest Petit Verdot, this rich, unctuously textured beauty has terrific concentration, sweet tannins, and the vintage's hallmark elegance and finesse. One of the most concentrated, powerful wines in the vintage, it needs 4-5 years of bottle age (or a healthy decant) and will evolve for 30+ years if stored properly. Not enough can be said about what proprietors Daniel and Florence Cathiard, as well as winemaker Fabien Teitgen, continue to achieve at this estate."*

- Jeb Dunnuck

*"The grand vin 2019 Château Smith Haut Lafitte comes from the heart of the Léognan region and beautiful, gravelly soils. Deeply hued, it's a slightly fresher, more structured wine and has beautiful crème de cassis and almost hints of blue fruits as well as classic Graves gravelly, damp earth, unsmoked tobacco, graphite, and spice. Beautifully done, with full-bodied richness, a great mid-palate, and both vibrant acidity and ripe tannins, it's going to need a solid 7-8 years of bottle age but will be a classic, world-class expression of this terroir."*

- Jeb Dunnuck

*"Deep dark ruby garnet, violet reflections, delicate lightening of the edges. Fine black berry confit underlaid with orange zest, dark cherries, inviting notes of precious wood, cassis, and liquorice. Powerful on the palate, blackberries, black cherries, fine acid structure, present, well-integrated tannins that still need some time, mineral notes, fine nougat, a true Vin de Garde, the sweet fruit in the core is still covered by the tannins, definite potential for development."*

- Falstaff Magazine

*"Certified organic in 2019. 59% Cabernet Sauvignon, with 36% Merlot, 4% Cabernet Franc and 1% Petit Verdot. The 2019 is quintessential Smith Haut Lafitte that followers should buy with confidence. Deep ruby in colour with highly refined and enticing nose of polished black fruit and a little sweet red cherry. The fragrant aromatics are laced with sweet but well measured spice. The palate is glossy, with silky black fruit at the core. Super fleshy but highly refined, the spice and succulence are perfectly judged. There is enough bite and savoury depth to leave a moreish, harmonious impression of fruit despite the opulent vanilla and sweet wood smoke on show. The tannins are perfectly judged, ripe and fine but ample for long-term ageing. Precise and moreish in equal measure, an excellent effort."*

- Tom Parker MW

*"The nose is fruity, fresh and offers a racy power, elegance, delicacy, and a beautiful definition/purity of the fruit. It reveals notes of ripe/fresh lemon, fleshy/juicy apple, small notes of William pear associated with touches of citrus zests, kumquat as well as fine hints of lemon flowers, small exotic fruits, a fine hint of rose and discreet hints of spices/timut pepper. The palate is fruity, elegant, gourmand and offers a beautiful definition, precision, tension as well as a beautiful finesse/purity of the fruit, a bright/pulpy/juicy fruit, suavity and sapidity. On the palate this wine expresses notes of juicy/acidulous/ripe lemon, juicy mandarin, small notes of vine peach, crushed apple associated with touches of lychee, rose, quenette/passion fruit as well as a subtle hint of quince, almond, and discreet hints of toasted/brioche."*

- Vert de Vin