

Château L'If 2021

CSPC# 102700

750mlx3

13.5% alc./vol.

Grape Variety 79% Merlot, 21% Cabernet Franc
Appellation Saint-Emilion
Classification Unclassified.
Website <https://www.thienpontwine.com/>

Analysis pH 3.61

Sustainability Château L'If is also known for its commitment to sustainability, with the winery having adopted a number of practices to reduce its environmental impact.

General Info L'If is owned by Jacques Thienpont, who is best known for his Pomerol estate, Le Pin. Before Jacques Thienpont purchased it in 2010, this property was called Château Le Haut-Plantey.

The Thienpont family has a passion for naming their wine after trees. After naming Le Pin after a lone pine tree on the property and turning it into a legendary success, would you break the tradition? As a result, we now have pine (Le Pin), yew (L'If), and beech (L'Hêtre).

There are few families that are in the top echelon of every wine category they own. When it comes to Bordeaux's Right Bank, the Thienpont family is one to reckon with! Since their marriage in 1997, Jacques & Fiona (who earned her Master of Wine title in 1994) have been dividing their time among their three estates: Le Pin (Pomerol), L'IF (St Emilion) and L'Hêtre (formerly named Château Goubau) (Castillon). The iconic Le Pin retails for thousands of dollars a bottle every vintage. Fortunately, the winemaker also brings to the market less pricey wines such as L'IF and L'Hêtre.

The original Haut-Plantey vineyard was not classified; therefore, L'If is simply labeled a Saint-Émilion. "We decided not to apply for a reclassification," said Cyrille. "We don't think it needs a classification, and we hope people will find the greatness in the wine without having to write any classification on the label."

Winemakers Cyrille Thienpont

Vintage If 2021 was drier than previous years, two intense climatic episodes impacted the vintage. The first one is the April frost which mobilized our teams for 9 nights. The second is linked to the strong episodes of rain in June, with nearly 180 mm of precipitation. The trio August / September / October was accompanied by low rainfall, allowing to harvest in optimal conditions and preserving the qualitative potential of the vintage.

Vineyards The 8-hectare St. Emilion vineyard of L'if is planted to 70% Merlot and 30% Cabernet Franc. A small portion of Cabernet Sauvignon that was equal to about 1% of the vineyard has been removed. This is a continuing change in the vineyard makeup as there was a much higher planting of Cabernet Sauvignon in the past. You can expect a higher percentage of Cabernet Franc here in the future.

L'if is located just east of the Saint Emilion village, not far from Chateau Troplong Mondot or La Mondotte. A smaller portion of the vineyard is also situated in a valley, close to Chateau Lassegue, which is about a mile from the main vineyard. The terroir is chalky limestone with clay soil.

The vineyards for L'IF are divided into 14 separate parcels. Following the initial purchase of the estate, a lot of work went into the vineyard starting with the planting of a diverse array of grasses. Vines were replanted at higher densities.

Harvest Merlot, harvested on 2, 6, 12 and 13 October, and Cabernet Franc, harvested on 16 October

**Vinification/
Maturation** The vinification of L'if takes place in conical-shaped, temperature-controlled, stainless-steel vats. Malolactic fermentation takes place in 50% new, French oak barrels.

The wine of L'if is then aged in 50% new, French oak barrels for an average of 12 to 16 months before bottling.

Tasting Notes The 2021 L'IF has brightness, elegance and intensity which leap out of the glass with lots of pure fruit and limestone minerality. The nose is precise and fresh with notes of autumn fruit, licorice, sweet berries, and spice. On the palate the wine is very lively and pretty, with damson, cassis fruit and a well-structured vein of energetic tannins running through it. The wine ends with a long and smooth fresh finish. This is the first year that the Cabernet Franc grapes makes up 21% of the blend with 79% Merlot. Seven of the eight hectares are now in



Tasting Notes	production and the restructuring of the vineyard is almost complete. This is a stunning wine to mark the 10th anniversary of Jacques Thienpont's purchase of this great Saint-Emilion terroir.
Serve with	L'if is best served at 15.5 degrees Celsius, 60 degrees Fahrenheit. The cool, almost cellar temperature gives the wine more freshness and lift. L'if is best paired with all types of classic meat dishes, veal, pork, beef, lamb, duck, game, roast chicken, roasted, braised, and grilled dishes
Production	830 cases made
Cellaring	Drink 2026-2036
Scores/Awards	<p>88 points - James Molesworth, Wine Spectator - January 2024</p> <p>92-94+ points - William Kelley, Wine Advocate - April 2022</p> <p>89-91 points - Lisa Perrotti-Brown, The Wine Independent - May 2022</p> <p>94 points - Zekun Shuai, JamesSuckling.com - December 2023</p> <p>95-96 points - James Suckling, JamesSuckling.com - May 2022</p> <p>16.5 points - James Lawther, JancisRobinson.com - May 2022</p> <p>93 points - Georgina Hindle, Decanter.com - March 2022</p> <p>90 points - Jane Anson, janeanson.com - May 2022</p> <p>94-96 points - Jeff Leve, thewinecellarinsider.com - May 2022</p> <p>93 points - Tim Atkin, MW - timatkin.com (score only) - April 2022</p> <p>92-95 points - Thomas Parker, Farr Vintners - April 2022</p> <p>93-95 points - Neal Martin, Vinous - May 2022</p> <p>96 points - Antonio Galloni, Vinous - February 2024</p> <p>94-96 points - Antonio Galloni, Vinous - May 2022</p> <p>93-95 points - Jeb Dunnuck MW - June 2022</p> <p>17.5 points - Matthew Jukes - August 2022</p> <p>93 points - Jean Marc Quarin (score only) - April 2022</p> <p>93 points - Peter Moser, Falstaff Magazine - May 2022</p> <p>92-93 points - Bettane & Desseauve (score only) - May 2022</p>
Reviews	<p><i>"Reveals a core of direct black cherry and plum fruit wrapped in a layer of singed cedar and vanilla, with a lively savory edge peeking in on the finish. Merlot and Cabernet Franc. Drink now through 2027. 830 cases made."</i> - JM, Wine Spectator</p> <p><i>"A blend of 79% Merlot and 21% Cabernet Franc, the 2021 L'if shows considerable potential, and if it evolves as well as I suspect it will during élevage, it may make my score seem conservative. Offering up aromas of dark berries and plums mingled with loamy soil, black truffles, and sweet forest floor, it's medium to full-bodied, layered and seamless, with velvety tannins and a bright spine of acidity, concluding with a long, saline finish. The core of L'if, amounting to some five hectares, is located around the château itself, just below Troplong-Mondot, complemented by two hectares near Lassegue and another hectare in cooler Saint-Étienne-de-Lisse. Out of this eight-hectare patchwork, four have been replanted in the last decade, with superior vine genetics and at higher densities. Today, soil studies inform a precise assemblage, focusing on the best clays, and L'if is really developing a strong identity. Tasting through all the vintages produced to date with Cyrille Thienpont, who oversees this project, he described the 2012 blend as "beginner's luck," foreshadowing what was achieved in 2015, and from 2017 on. Fleshy, enveloping and refined, with plenty of perfume and texture, the estate's style is becoming very compelling, and it is front-and-center in the 2021 vintage."</i> - WK, Wine Advocate</p> <p><i>"The 2021 L'if is a blend of 79% Merlot, harvested on 2, 6, 12 and 13 October, and 21% Cabernet Franc, harvested on 16 October. Deep garnet-purple in color, it springs with lively notions of fresh blackberries, redcurrants, and boysenberries, plus suggestions of lavender, cardamom, pencil shavings, and fallen leaves. Medium-bodied, the palate has a fine-grained texture and lively acidity supporting the intense black fruits, finishing with a red berry lift. pH 3.61. 2026-2036."</i> - LPB, Wine Independent</p> <p><i>"Cedar and green tobacco with berries, currants, and lavender with some sandalwood. Medium-bodied with linear and firm tannins that give this energy and focus. Refined and polished texture. 79% merlot and 21% cabernet franc. Give this two or three years to soften."</i> - JS, JamesSuckling.com</p>

Reviews *"A serious and saline red with blue fruit, cloves, iodine, and black licorice. Oyster shells, too. Medium to full bodied with fine, firm tannins that run the length of the wine. Focused. 79% merlot and 21% cabernet franc."*
- JS, JamesSuckling.com

"79% Merlot, 21% Cabernet Franc. Cask sample. Smoky, dark-fruit notes with a hint of morello cherry. Juicy, sweet and aromatic on the palate, the tannins fine. Tightens on the finish to give a bit of length. Shows dynamism. Promising. (JL) 13.5%. Drink 2028 – 2038."
- JL, JancisRobinson.com

"Fragrant black cherries with dark chocolate, smells so beautifully scented with juniper, plum and damson. Bright and characterful, sleek, and suave on the palate, fresh and fruity, filling the mouth with mouthwatering juice. I love the minerality - saline, iodine, graphite, wet stone, and pencil lead flavours with a chalky feel. It has an expansive but gentle character in the mouth, not massively weighty but a good push of flavour. A touch of austerity comes into play, but this maintains direction with tension and clarity. Well worked and graceful, if a little compact right now. Lots of promise."
- GH, Decanter.com

"Cyrille Thienpont is in charge here, and he has teased out attractive blueberry fruits, along with graphite, pencil lead and gunsmoke. Chalky tannins reflect the clay-limestone soils, this is full of pleasure, even while austerity is gripping the finish. Highest percentage of Cabernet Franc to date, after including recent plantings. 50% new oak. Harvest October 2 to 16."
- JA, janeanson.com

"Deeply colored, the nose pops with flowers, red pit fruits, cherries, red plums, smoke, and charcoal. Rich, and sweet, with ripe, round tannins and silky-textured plums, dark chocolate, and espresso on the mid-palate, with a fair amount of salinity on the backend in the finish, this is quite successful for the vintage. This remains one of the new stars of St. Emilion and is a wine to follow before prices jump. The wine blends 79% Merlot with 21% Cabernet Franc, 13.5% ABV, pH 3.61. Drink from 2026-2050."
- JL, thewinecellarinsider.com

"2021 marks the 10th year of ownership and work at L'If for Jacques Thienpont. Four of the eight hectares that were replanted are now in production and gradually being introduced to the Grand Vin. The blend is 79% Merlot and 21% Cabernet Franc, a direct representation of plantings. Roughly 10,000 bottles will be made, about half the capacity Jacques hopes to produce once the vineyard is fully restored. Work has begun on a new winery at the property, which should be completed in time for the 2022 harvest. 13.5% abv. 50% new French oak. Deep ruby colour with dark, iron-led fruit on the nose. The extra Cabernet Franc is clearly a success here, bitter cocoa, graphite and fresher red berries all come through on the nose. The palate follows, with mocha, damsons and steeped black cherries. The tannins are succulent and add a real savoury depth. Succulent and long, this is a very successful iteration of this wine that is really starting to find its feet under the Thienpont stewardship."
- TP, Farr Vintners

"The 2021 L'If was picked October 2–16 and sees a higher proportion of Cabernet Franc (21%), as new plantings from a massal selection from Pavie-Macquin enter the Grand Vin. For the first time, I think L'If matches Le Pin pound for pound. Exuberant yet well-defined red fruit soars from the glass along with touches of shell, subtle estuarine aromas and so forth. The palate is medium-bodied with perhaps a little more concentration than its aforementioned stablemate, hints of blue fruit and iodine emerging toward the finish. The Cabernet really adds something to the blend here, and it will be fascinating to watch this evolve. (13.5% alcohol)."
- NM, Vinous

"The 2021 L'If is a wine of power and reserve. It exudes notable density and richness, but in the more restrained style of the year. Black cherry, graphite, spice, leather, tobacco, and chocolate fill out the layers effortlessly. The 2021 is a gorgeous wine, but it won't be ready to appreciate fully for a number of years. Even so, it was exquisite in two separate tastings."
- AG, Vinous

Reviews

“The 2021 L’If is super-impressive right out of the gate. A high percentage of Cabernet Franc (21%) along with the introduction of 400-liter barrels yields an If that is marked by a striking interplay of richness and breadth allied to a palpable sense of energy. Dark cherry, cloves, leather, crushed rocks, rose petal and blood orange are some of the myriad aromas and flavors that develop with a little coaxing. The 2021 is a deeply intriguing wine. I can’t wait to see how it ages. Tasted two times.”

- AG, Vinous

“From the team at Le Pin, the 2021 Château L’If comes from an 8-hectare parcel near Troplong Mondot that was planted in 2010. A blend of 79% Merlot and 21% Cabernet Franc resting in 50% new barrels, it has a medium-bodied, elegant, yet concentrated profile as well as notes of ripe cherries, darker raspberries, chalky minerality, and spring flowers. The tannins here are top-notch, and it has good mid-palate depth and a great finish. A gem of a wine, it can be hard to find in the market, but it’s worth tracking down.”

- Jeb Dunnuck

“Clean, precise, mineral-drenched and chiseled, 2021 L’If is an arresting wine in 2021 with beautifully expressive fruit and a bright, crunchy finish. There is admirable depth here, and under the purple exterior, an adroit and firm set of black fruit notes stand perfectly to attention. While the finish is tart, it will propel this wine forwards successfully for a good decade and more, and it is already set to be a noteworthy vintage for this fascinating property.”

- Matthew Jukes

“Dark ruby core, purple reflections, subtle brightening on the rim. Delicate restrained red cherries and fresh wild berries, hints of herbal savouriness and tobacco nuances with a touch of wood spices. Medium complexity, red currants, taut well-integrated tannins, mineral-citrus finish. Very fresh and lively, great with food.”

- PM, Falstaff Magazine
