

## Château Lafon-Rochet 1996

CSPC# 785891

750mlx12

13.0% alc./vol.

### Grape Variety

55% Cabernet Sauvignon, 40% Merlot, 5% Cabernet Franc

### Appellation

Saint Estèphe

### Classification

Fourth Growth. Quatrieme Grand Cru Classe in 1855.

### Website

<http://www.lafon-rochet.com/en/>

### General Info

Chateau Lafon Rochet in St. Estephe dates back to the middle of the 17th century. The estate was founded in 1650, when Antoinette de Guillemotte, brought the land of Rochette as her dowry to her husband, Pierre de Lafon. Shortly after they were married, following the custom of the day, they renamed the estate, using their last name, coupled with the previous name of the property and Chateau Lafon Rochet was born.

While many Bordeaux vineyards were confiscated during the French Revolution, that did not happen to Lafon Rochet. In fact, the Left Bank estate remained the property of the same family for more than two centuries.

Everything changed at Chateau Lafon Rochet in 1959 when Guy Tesseron purchased the estate. The property needed extensive work as it had fallen into a dilapidated state. The Tesseron family, under the direction of Guy Tesseron completely renovated Lafon Rochet from top to bottom. This was something that had to be done as most of the original buildings were in such bad shape, they could no longer be used. The vineyard also needed extensive replanting. At the time of the purchase, the vineyard was only 17 hectares. Through replanting and subsequent purchases, the estate has more than doubled in size since the Tesseron family took control of the property. That marked the start of the modern era for Chateau Lafon Rochet. Tesseron had his work cut out for him at his Medoc property in the 1960's. The vineyards were as we mentioned in poor shape. Much of the land needed to be replanted in part, but the grape varieties that already existed in the vineyards were planted in the wrong types of soils for their varietal. The Merlot was in the gravel and the Cabernets were in the clay. That is still slowly being corrected today, although currently, almost everything is as it should be. This explains why the wines are so much better today. Because the wine making facilities had also become dilapidated under the previous owners, Guy Tesseron was forced to build all new wine making facilities. Even the Chateau had to be replaced! In fact, Chateau Lafon Rochet is the only 1855 Classified growth with a new chateau that was constructed in the 20th century!

In 1999, after being in the Bordeaux wine trade for more than four decades, Michel Tesseron, took over the property and decided to change the classic style of the 18th century design that was created for the chateau. Michel Tesseron did it by adding some color to Lafon Rochet in 2000. As you can see, the chateau of Lafon Rochet is now a bright, sunny, bold, Mediterranean shade of yellow. It's an artistic statement according to Michel Tesseron. At the same time, the labels of Chateau Lafon Rochet were also changed to showcase the new, artistic, sun filled, yellow theme. Chateau Lafon Rochet is still in the Tesseron family hands. Currently the Saint Estephe property is ably managed by the son of Michel Tesseron, Basile Tesseron. It is Basile Tesseron who is helping usher Chateau Lafon Rochet into the modern age. Basile Tesseron, who started at the estate in 2007, after training with négociants, speaks perfect English, with a subtle accent. This is something he picked up while living in England.



**Vineyards** The 45-hectare vineyard of Lafon Rochet is in almost one single, large parcel, which is unusual for the region. They have 41 hectares under vine. Their terroir is mostly gravel, clay, sand, limestone and marl soils. Part of what makes their terroir unique is that some of the clay in their vineyards is the same type of hard, blue clay found in Pomerol at Petrus . Chateau Lafon Rochet has good neighbors. They are ideally placed not far from Chateau Cos d'Estournel and Chateau Lafite Rothschild in Pauillac . The Saint Estephe vineyard of Lafon Rochet is planted to 57% Cabernet Sauvignon , 37% Merlot, 4% Petit Verdot and 2% Cabernet Franc . This shows a slight increase in their Cabernet Sauvignon plantings. On average, the vines are kept at 37 years of age. However, the estate has old vines. Their oldest parcels have Merlot vines that were planted all the way back in 1938. The vineyard is planted to a vine density of 9,000 vines per hectare on 40 separate blocks.

Lafon Rochet continues to experiment with organic and biodynamic farming techniques. At least 10% of their vineyards were farmed using these techniques with more of their vineyards to follow if they like the results. Things turned around quickly here. In 2016, for the first time, they farmed almost 100% of their vines using organic farming methods. At Chateau Lafon Rochet, they take advantage of optical sorting techniques.

**Harvest** 24<sup>th</sup> September-9<sup>th</sup> October 1996

**Vinification/  
Maturation** Manually harvested, crushed into vat for cold pre-fermentation maceration for 24-72 hrs. Alcoholic fermentation for 10 days, wine is separated from Grape seeds and skin and run into barrels for maloOactic fermentation which lasts from November to February with final blend made in March, then aged in oak till bottling. Aged 16 to 20 months in 50-60% new barrels.

**Tasting Notes** Lafon-Rochet 1996 presents a fresh, floral and saline bouquet. In the mouth, the wine is full-bodied with a fine mid-palate and a long, agreeable finish. Predominant aromas include freshly cut mint, while the tannins are still very much present and powerful. 20 years on, this wine retains a very fine structure and freshness.

**Production** 12,000 cases

**Cellaring** Drink 2005-2020

**Scores/Awards** **90 points** - James Suckling, Wine Spectator - Web Only 2007  
**90 points** - James Suckling, Wine Spectator - January 31, 1999  
**90 points** - Robert Parker, Wine Advocate #122 - April 1999  
**87-90 points** - Robert Parker, Wine Advocate #115 - February 1998  
**90-91 points** - Robert Parker, Wine Advocate #110 - April 1997  
**88 points** - Neal Martin, Wine Journal - March 2008  
**84 points** - Neal Martin, Wine Journal - January 2000  
**88-91 points** - Stephen Tanzer's International Wine Cellar - May/June 1999  
**17.5 points** - Jancis Robinson, JancisRobinson.com - December 2011  
**16 points** - Jancis Robinson, JancisRobinson.com - September 2006  
**17.5 points/4 stars** - Decanter.com - April 2012  
**89 points** - Jeff Leve, thewinecellarinsider.com - January 2, 2015  
**15.7 points** - Farr Vintner (score only) September 2006  
**17.5 points** - Chris Kissack, The Wine Doctor - July 2001  
**17.5 points** - Chris Kissack, The Wine Doctor - July 2001  
**14 points** - Vinum Wine Magazine (score only)  
**16.5 points** - La Revue du Vin France (score only)  
**90 points** - Jean Marc Quarin (score only)

**Reviews** *"Blackberry and licorice aromas and flavors. Full-bodied, with velvety tannins and a long finish. Clearly better in 1996 than in 1995. --'95/'96 Bordeaux retrospective. Best after 2008."*

- JS, Wine Spectator

*"Dark-colored, with floral, spice and dark-fruit character; the mineral and spice flavors follow through on the palate. Medium- to full-bodied, with silky tannins and a caressing texture. A refined and balanced Lafon-Rochet. Best after 2001."*

- JS, Wine Spectator

## Reviews

*"One of the sleepers of the 1996 vintage, Lafon-Rochet has turned out an atypically powerful, rich, and concentrated wine bursting with black currant fruit. The opaque purple color gives way to a medium to full-bodied, tannic, backward wine with terrific purity, a sweet, concentrated mid-palate, and a long, blockbuster finish. This wine remains one of the finest values from the luxury-priced 1996 vintage and is well-worth purchasing by readers who are willing to invest 5-6 years of patience; it should keep for two decades. Anticipated maturity: 2005-2020."*

- RP, Wine Advocate

*"Dense ruby/purple-colored, this big, burly, masculine wine exhibits hard tannin, but also intense concentration of fruit. It was tasting more monolithic and tougher-textured than it had last spring, but there is no doubting that it is a highly extracted, rich, layered wine with considerable potential. Patience will be essential. Anticipated maturity: 2007-2020."*

*The Tesseron family, who have done so much to propel Pontet-Canet into the limelight, continue to upgrade the quality of Lafon-Rochet. The above effort is a tannic, backward wine that will require patience."*

- RP, Wine Advocate

*"Readers should jump on this estate's bandwagon. The 1994 Lafon-Rochet was promising; the 1995 was one of the most unheralded great wines of the vintage; and the 1996, while not quite as sweet and rich as the 1995, is an outstanding wine with 25-30 years of aging potential. We can thank proprietor Alfred Tesseron (also the owner of Pontet-Canet) for turning around the fortunes of Lafon-Rochet. The 1996 exhibits a black/purple color, and a tight but intriguing nose of Asian spices, licorice, minerals, and jammy black-raspberries and cassis. There is a sweet entry, but the wine is extremely tannic, powerful, and in need of at least a decade of cellaring. It is a muscular, almost over-bearing style of wine with terrific purity, and, for its size, remarkable equilibrium. Anticipated maturity: 2008-2025. A sleeper."*

- RP, Wine Advocate

*"This tasted poorly when blind last year but here the 1996 is more impressive. A very attractive nose of cedar, tobacco, wet sand, thyme and graphite. Complex with good definition. This is an excellent 1996 with firm structure but not austere, masculine with focus and poise on the tobacco-flavoured finish. Still a little backward and quite toasty with some way to go. Drink 2010-2018. Tasted October 2007."*

- NM, Wine Journal

*"A sweet, almost liquorice style nose. Wet sand, a touch of dates. Smoother entry, quite a high extraction. Black fruits and a touch of liquorice again. Toasty, noticeable new oak. Just lacking a little character and finesse. Tasted September 2006."*

- NM, Wine Journal

*"Deep ruby-red. Cassis, black olive, menthol and smoke on the nose. Rather unforthcoming in the middle palate today. In a distinctly drier style despite showing a ripe note of chocolate. Good but not outstanding flavor intensity."*

- ST, International Wine Cellar

*"Relatively pale and evolved. A bit stringy and light on the nose. Very lightweight though correct - a bit austere. This will never be voluptuous!"*

- JR, JancisRobinson.com

*"Mid ruby with hardly any ageing. Quite full and ripe and dense and attention grabbing. Big, bold fruit followed by St-Estèphe freshness. Lots to get your teeth into here... Very youthful. Very flattering. Quite sweet for a St-Estèphe."*

- JR, JancisRobinson.com

*"Very deep red; sweet succulent nose, surprisingly open; medium-bodied, quite lush and concentrated, forward but has plenty of grip, very good balance; good length and a spicy finish."*

- SS, Decanter.com

**Reviews** *“Fully mature, with an attractive, tobacco, cedar chest, spice and cherry tobacco nose. Medium bodied, and better on the palate than with its stern character, this is ready for prime-time consumption and will probably be at its best over the next 3-5 years.”*  
- JL, [thewinecellarinsider.com](http://thewinecellarinsider.com)

*“Young, but well priced compared with many more illustrious names on the list, and I've always enjoyed the 1996s, even in their youth, for the classic, left-bank Cabernet character that they show. This was no disappointment. Decanted shortly before dining. Full colour, classic stony black fruit nose, and a surprisingly full, ripe, almost creamy texture. Very well poised though, still some youthful fruit, but a nice backbone of approachable tannins, and a lovely, hard and stony St Estèphe character to it. This has moved on somewhat in the last three years but will still benefit from cellar time. Very good.*  
- CK, *The Wine Doctor*

*“A youthful hue. I thought this an open, expressive wine, with exotic notes of black olive and Asian spices, although others were less taken. More tannin than the 1995 on the palate, but matched by a good texture, medium body, firm sweet fruit and correct acidity. The tannins win on the finish though. A lovely, altogether wine which needs time in the cellar.”*  
- CK, *The Wine Doctor*

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