

Château Lafite Rothschild 2017

CSPC# 831125

750mlx6

12.8% alc./vol.

Grape Variety

97% Cabernet Sauvignon, 2.5% Merlot, 0.5% Petit Verdot

Appellation

Pauillac

Classification

First Growth. Premier Grand Cru Classe in 1855.

Website

<http://www.lafite.com/eng>

General Info

Château Lafite Rothschild is one of the most renowned wine properties in the Médoc. Owned by Baron Eric de Rothschild and Lafite Rothschild is also one of the largest Médoc estates.

The vineyards of Ch. Lafite are found at the northern tip of the Pauillac appellation, just below the boundary with St. Estephe. There is evidence of an estate on this site as far back as the 14th century, and of exports of wine to the UK in the early 17th century. The current owners, the Rothschilds of the famous banking dynasty, bought the property in 1866, but this is a different brand of the family from that which purchased Ch. Mouton-Rothschild. For many years, the Rothschilds' control of Lafite was very much exercised at a distance, compared to the hands-on influence of Baron Philippe at Mouton, but since the Second World War this has changed somewhat, with the current owner, Eric de Rothschild, presiding over an extensive programme of investment in both vineyard and cellar. Throughout the 20th century Lafite was dogged by periods of inconsistency, often producing sublime wines but also failing to live up to its billing in other years. Since 1994, however the estate has been under the control of Charles Chevalier, and he has brought about not just an admirable level of consistency but has also been responsible for some truly brilliant wines often vying for the title of "Wine of the Vintage".

Winemaker

Eric Kohler Technical Director

Vintage

After escaping the frosts with minimal damage, Lafite Rothschild's winemaker Eric Kohler commented, "Most of the rest of the vintage was excellent." He went on to confess, "Unfortunately, September 10-20 we had some rains. This was toward the end of harvest. Harvest finished on September 30. If we hadn't had the rains, the wines would have been more concentrated. But the slight dilution was great for balance." Then he mentioned what is the critical point here, that the grapes were ripe when the rains came. "If they weren't ripe, things would have been difficult." As for the winemaking, "This year what was important was maceration—the effect was spectacular in the mouth and the analysis. 16% of press wine was used this year—which is a high percentage!" Commenting on the very high percentage of Cabernet Sauvignon in the grand vin this year, "When you have Cabernet Sauvignon of this level, you don't want to use anything else—it can look like the Merlot is already blended in. For us, I believe 2017 was even better than 2015." Kohler summarizes, "If I have one word for all the wines, it's harmony." After a rather mild winter, there were two nights of severe frost in the spring, on 26 and 27 April, which inflicted major damage on Bordeaux's vineyards. Miraculously, Lafite emerged unscathed. Conditions then became excellent, with higher than usual temperatures and balanced, well-spaced rainfall. Flowering was early, and by mid-June the fruit had set almost two weeks earlier than usual. After some quite heavy rain at the end of June, temperatures remained slightly below average for the rest of the summer. This enabled a slow, steady ripening of the grapes from "mi-véraison" (the middle of the period when the grapes change colour) to mid-September when the harvests began. A final rainy spell from 10 to 20 September disrupted the otherwise perfect weather, without impacting the quality of the grapes. The wines confirmed great potential, revealing a fairly classic character.

Vineyards

All told the Lafite estate amounts to 178 hectares, although of this only 112 hectares are planted to vines, with the varieties dominated by Cabernet Sauvignon (71%), then



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| Vineyards | Merlot (25%), Cabernet Franc (3%) and just a little Petit Verdot (1%). Average vine age is 45 years, although young vines (here meaning less than 10 years old) are not included in the <i>grand vin</i> , so those that are included have an average age of about 45 years. There are a few plots of more advanced age, including La Gravière, which was planted in 1886, and a number where the vines are between 50 and 80 years old. The <i>terroir</i> underfoot is typically gravelly, with Aeolian sands on a bedrock of tertiary limestone, known locally as <i>calcaire de St Estèphe</i> . |
| Harvest | Harvest took place between September 11 to September 29 |
| Maturation | Fermentation takes place in stainless steel vats, after which the wine is run off into barrels, 100% new for Lafite itself for 18 months. |
| Tasting Notes | Lafite has a soul, a beautiful, generous, kindly soul. Lafite turns bare earth into heaven. Lafite is harmony, a harmony between man and nature, because without our magnificent winegrowers, nothing would be accomplished. Deep, dark colour. The nose is still reserved but offers a glimpse of enormous aromatic potential that will be revealed over time. Very fresh, with delicate notes of cedar and mint. Intense and vibrant on the palate, giving the impression of tremendous power still contained. Despite its youth, this wine presents a very harmonious character, in which one can already appreciate the qualities of a great Lafite, combining finesse and concentration. |
| Serve with | Chateau Lafite Rothschild is best paired with all types of classic meat dishes, veal, pork, beef, lamb, duck, game, roast chicken, roasted, braised and grilled dishes. |
| Production | 16,000 cases made |
| Cellaring | Drink 2025-2040 |
| Scores/Awards | <p>96 points - James Molesworth, Wine Spectator - March 31, 2020</p> <p>97-99 points - Lisa Perrotti-Brown, Wine Advocate #236 - April 2018</p> <p>97+ points - Lisa Perrotti-Brown, Wine Advocate - March 2020</p> <p>97 points - James Suckling, JamesSuckling.com - February 2020</p> <p>97-98 points - James Suckling, JamesSuckling.com - April 2018</p> <p>97 points/Cellar Selection - Roger Voss, Wine Enthusiast - March 1, 2020</p> <p>96-98 points - Roger Voss, Wine Enthusiast - April 1, 2018</p> <p>17 points - Julia Harding, JancisRobinson.com - April 2018</p> <p>98 points - Jane Anson, Decanter.com - April 2018</p> <p>97 points - Decanter.com - April 2018</p> <p>97 points - Jeff Leve, thewinecellarinsider.com - April 2018</p> <p>95-97 points - Tim Atkin, MW - timatkin.com - April 2018</p> <p>17+ points - Farr Vintner - April 2018</p> <p>90-95 points - Derek Smedley, MW - April 2018</p> <p>95 points - Neal Martin, Vinous - February 2020</p> <p>95-97 points - Neal Martin, Vinous - May 2018</p> <p>96+ points - Antonio Galloni, Vinous - February 2020</p> <p>94-97 points - Antonio Galloni, Vinous - April 2018</p> <p>94 points - Jeb Dunnuck MW - February 2020</p> <p>94-96 points - Jeb Dunnuck MW - April 2018</p> <p>18.5+ points - Matthew Jukes, MW - April 2018</p> |
| Reviews | <p><i>"This is a youthful tumble of warmed black currant, fig and blackberry paste flavors, entwined with bay leaf, tobacco, savory, lilac, smoldering charcoal and warm cast iron notes. Terrific stony minerality zips everything up for now, but riveting acidity and excellent energy should carry this easily in the cellar. Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Petit Verdot. Best from 2025 through 2040. 16,000 cases made"</i></p> <p>- JM, Wine Spectator</p> <p><i>"Composed of 97% Cabernet Sauvignon, 2.5% Merlot and 0.5% Petit Verdot, the 2017 Lafite Rothschild is deep garnet-purple colored. It opens slowly, cautiously with restrained notes of chocolate-covered cherries, mulberries, warm blackcurrants and wild blueberries, followed by emerging notions of smoked meats, fragrant earth, crushed rocks and lilacs with touches of cast-iron pan and Marmite toast. Medium-bodied, the palate is deceptively light and quite ethereal on entry, growing in the mouth to reveal elegant layers of energetic red and black fruits with tons of savory accents. Framed by exquisitely ripe, wonderfully fine-grained tannins, it has exhilarating freshness and a very long, hypnotically perfumed finish. On a final note, the alcohol here is a jaw-dropping 12.5%, which is something of a miracle considering the ripeness of the Cabernet. A total head-</i></p> |

Reviews *turner, I cannot wait to follow the development of this wine! Rating: 97+.”*
- LPB, Wine Advocate

“Composed of 96% Cabernet Sauvignon with 3.5% Merlot and 0.5% Petit Verdot, the deep garnet-purple colored 2017 Lafite Rothschild is a little shy on the nose to begin, opening out to scents of crushed blackcurrants, black cherries and warm black plums with touches of yeast extract, charcuterie, cigar box and fertile loam plus a hint of iron ore. POW—the paradoxically ethereal, medium-bodied palate hits you with vibrant, exhilarating black fruit and previously latent floral layers, supported with fantastic freshness and super fine-grained, pixelated tannins, finishing with persistent mineral and perfumed layers. Truly. Stunning.”
- LPB, Wine Advocate

“Deep and typical on the nose with blackcurrants, black tea, leather and graphite. The aromas draw you down to the palate. Full-bodied, creamy and beautiful with extremely polished, refined tannins. Yet, it’s powerful and long. Highest percent of cabernet sauvignon ever. Juicy and almost exotic, but very tidy with ripe tannins. Try after 2025 and onwards.”
- JS, JamesSuckling.com

“This is very tight and tannic with lots of blackcurrant and sweet-tobacco character. Firm and powerful tannin texture sets this up for a long and chewy finish, yet it remains very compact and polished. It’s a wine that possesses all the hallmarks of Lafite — everything from flavors to structure.”
- JS, JamesSuckling.com

“This wine is poised, gathering freshness and good acidity in the same structured container as the pure black-currant fruits. With 97% Cabernet Sauvignon, the wine has a classicism about it: fruity and structured at the same time. Drink from 2024.”
- RV, Wine Enthusiast

“Firm and closed, this is a dark and dense wine. There are impressive tannins alongside juicy black plum flavors as well as great concentration. It is an exceptional wine; with the power you should expect from a Lafite. It is certain to age and will not be ready before 2025.”
- RV, Wine Enthusiast

“Inky crimson. Dark, savoury black fruit, a little understated in aroma. On the palate, could do with just a little more flesh. It’s balanced and not overdone on the tannins but not the standout first growth this year. Elegant but rather underwhelming, perhaps lacking the sweetness and mid-palate depth of Merlot. Tannins very fine. Fresh and really quite soft, textural finesse but rather understated fruit. Savoury graphite finish. Drink 2027-2040”
- JH, JancisRobinson.com

“This is delicious, a real take-a-step-back moment. There’s a high percentage of Cabernet Sauvignon here, complex and layered with cassis and bilberry notes that tease the attack before being filled out with charcoal, slate, cedar, and even truffle hints, even at this early stage. The finish just doesn’t want to quit. It’s effortless but questioning, and most importantly it feels like a Lafite - for me this is a contender for red wine of the vintage. Less intense than 2016, but still just beautiful. 40hl/ha yield, unaffected by frost, or maybe just one tiny corner. 99% new oak. 3.75pH. Drinking Window 2027 – 2045”
- JA, Decanter.com

“Deep ruby in colour but not so inky as to be impenetrable - that is not their style. Nose subdued at first, but on the palate, it unfurls to show violet edging and rich but well-defined black fruits. Lafite never tries overly hard to please everyone in its early years, and this will take some time to open up. There is plenty of concentration - there are hefty tannins, but they are so finessed that you don’t feel them at first. It will almost certainly take a full ten years to reach its drinking window, unlike many in 2017. Its 97% Cabernet Sauvignon means a lot of the power is implied at this point, with only a hint of Merlot to soften and gently layer up through the palate. Extremely impressive. A yield of 40hl/ha only very lightly affected by frost. 99% new oak. 3.75pH”
- Decanter.com

Reviews

"This most graceful of the First Growths is brimming with luster, tranquility and refined textures. The wine glides in discreetly, slowly building intensity as it expands on your palate while quietly and effortlessly moving from sweet red fruits to darker plums and cherries. There is a flawless ascendancy here with length, purity of fruit and balance. This is a wine of finesse. Produced from a blend of 96% Cabernet Sauvignon, 3.5% Merlot and .5% Petit Verdot, the wine reached 12.8% alcohol with a pH of 3.75. The Grand Vin represents 40% of the harvest, which took place September 11 to September 29."

- JL, thewinecellarinsider.com

"Very dark purple colour. Super concentrated aromas of black fruit and spices. Some cinnamon and earth, rosehip and violet. Very concentrated and earthy-spicy with deep black fruit flavours and elegance, deftness of tannins. Balanced, creamy texture with freshness and complexity. Very long finish with fine tannins. It's powerful and flavoursome, but not the equal of the 2016. Barrel Sample: 95-97"

- TA, timatkin.com

"The 2017 vintage is strongly Cabernet Sauvignon with 96 % in the final blend with 3.5% Merlot and 0.5% Petit Verdot. A medium-deep ruby colour in the glass, there is great purity to this elegant, refined nose of pure cassis. With a little air wafts of sweet vanilla and savoury nutmeg come through, but much of the complexity is subsumed underneath structure at this early stage. This follows on the palate with very polished and fine-grained tannins gently supporting a dense and compact core of black fruit. This is all about poise and balance, with the fruit driving through to a long finish. It is only at the finish that the wine reveals its full potential, with creamy vanilla and fleshier black fruits lingering long after the wine has gone. This is subtle, refined, and harmonious."

- Farr Vintners

"Spring violets the nose has fragrance and freshness the palate starts with bramble and bilberry. Mid generosity the mid palate has a rich mix of black fruits the back palate ripe black cherry lighter on the finish length purity elegance. Drink 2027 - 2042."

- Derek Smedley MW

"The 2017 Lafite-Rothschild was bottled at the end June 2019, two months prior to my visit to the château. It has a lovely bouquet with blackberry, briary, brine and cedar. Generous, especially for the normally more introspective First Growth. The palate is medium bodied with supple tannins that frame the blackberry and bilberry fruit. The acidity is nicely judged and there is a satisfying linearity from start to finish. Classic Lafite-Rothschild in many ways, though it does not have the precision on the bravura finish that singles out a truly great vintage like the 2016. Yet, this will certainly give 20-30 years of pleasure. 2024 - 2055."

- NM, Vinous

"The 2017 Lafite-Rothschild had been blended in mid-March, a couple of weeks prior to my visit, therefore it was important to let this settle and aerate. Moreover, I returned on my final day in Bordeaux mid-April for a second reading. It feels very aloof at first, even a little green, although that ebbs away with time in the glass to reveal pure blackberry and bilberry fruit, touches of brine, cedar and graphite. Patience discloses a really quite sublime array of aromas. The palate is where all the action is: filigree tannin, very well-judged acidity, harmonious and poised with a silky-smooth finish that glides across the mouth. It does not possess enormous length, but it is very precise and, for want of a better, less clichéd word, classic from start to finish. Tasted twice with consistent notes. Drink 2023 - 2050."

- NM, Vinous

"During en primeur, the 2017 Lafite-Rothschild was one of the most impressive wines of the Left Bank. Today, it is equally impressive. An ample, richly constituted wine, the 2017 is an unusually dark, somber Lafite, with a percentage of Cabernet Sauvignon that is among the highest ever here. There is a sort of monastic sense of austerity that gives the wine its impression of reserve. Dark cherry, plum, chocolate, licorice, spice and menthol develop in the glass, but it will be many years before it awakens. Readers will have to be patient but there is a lot to look forward to here. Like many of his colleagues, Technical Director Eric Kohler opted for gentle extractions and incorporated a relatively high amount of press wine (16%) into the blend. Those are merely details, though, because the 2017 Lafite is stellar. 2027 – 2057"

- AG, Vinous

Reviews

“The 2017 Lafite-Rothschild is gorgeous. Silky, nuanced and polished, the 2017 captures all the finesse that makes Lafite such a vaunted property. Even in this unusual vintage, Lafite retains its super classic flavor profile, shape and personality. And that is one of the signatures of truly great sites. Like many of his colleagues, Technical Director Eric Kolher opted for gentle extractions and incorporated a relatively high amount of press wine (16%) into the blend. Those are merely details, though, because the 2017 Lafite is stellar. It also has the potential to be the most complete of the First Growths.”

- AG, Vinous

“The grand vin 2017 Chateau Lafite-Rothschild checks as a Cabernet Sauvignon-dominated blend that includes just 2.5% Merlot and less than 1% of Petit Verdot, brought up in new French oak. It shows the classy, elegant style of both the vintage and the estate, revealing a ruby/purple hue, complex notes of red and black currants, lead pencil, and cedary herbs, medium-bodied richness and depth, and both present tannins and acidity. It checks in behind the 2015 and 2016 yet is nevertheless a classic Lafite. It will benefit from a decade of bottle age and keep for 30 years or more.”

- Jeb Dunnuck

“The 2017 Lafite-Rothschild is another classic wine from this estate that’s in the same mold as the 2015, if not slightly deeper, darker, and more concentrated. Made from almost all Cabernet Sauvignon and offering a gorgeous array of crème de cassis, lead pencil, graphite, and hints of minerality, it’s medium to full-bodied, pure, precise, and as refined and elegant as it gets. It has the supple, approachable style of the vintage and will be relatively approachable in its youth yet will cruise for three decades on its balance and purity.

Barrel Sample: 94-96+”

- Jeb Dunnuck

“This is a very quiet and closed Lafite, with tannin and oak blocking the entry. The fruit is compact, very long but gruffly uncommunicative and this is an infuriating wine to taste now. I waited a full half an hour in order to agitate this wine into conversation and it was still stubbornly refusing to cooperate. This is a lean, controlled, introverted wine, as Lafite often is, but it also hints at something fascinating behind the veneer, and I cannot quite get a glimpse of what there is hidden therein. It will blossom, as always, but I am not going to guess at just how demonstrative this vintage will be in the future because there is an outside chance that it will just continue on its current path, quietly evolving and making little fuss.”

- MJ, matthewjukes.com
