

Château Smith Haut Lafitte Blanc 2009

CSPC# 749828

750mlx12

14.0% alc./vol.

Grape Variety

90 % Sauvignon Blanc, 5 % Sauvignon Gris, 5 % Sémillon

Appellation

Pessac-Léognan

General Info

Château Smith-Haut-Lafitte 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.

Vintage

The 2009 growing season benefited from beautiful summer and autumn weather (warm and sunny in the daytime, cool at night) conducive to good vine development and, later on, ripening. Accumulated temperatures were similar to 2005 and the water balance resembled 2000... In short, weather conditions were very favourable to making great wine.

Vineyards

The vineyards total 56 hectares, of which 45 hectares are planted to red varieties, comprising 35% Merlot, 55% Cabernet Sauvignon and 10% Cabernet Franc, the other 11 hectares being planted to white, specifically 90% Sauvignon Blanc, 5% Sauvignon Gris and 5% Semillon. The average vine age is 30 years, on the usual 101.14 and 3309 rootstocks, and planting density is between 7500 and 10000 vines per hectare. The soils are typical of the region, mainly Gunzian gravel.

Harvest

The white wine harvest began with Sauvignon Blanc on 7 September. Sugar levels were good (13.5% potential alcohol) as was acidity (pH of 3.3). We picked the grapes in several passes, helped in part by satellite photos that gave us a very useful overview of ripening patterns: The harvest is now even more finely tuned. We only harvested in the morning because the cool temperatures helped to retain our white wine grapes' full aromatic potential. The harvest came to an end on 23 September 2009 with the picking of beautiful Sémillon grapes.

Maturation

Fermentation in barrel: 50% new barrels from our integrated cooperage, and 50% barrels used for one previous vintage. Ageing in barrel with regular bâtonnage (lees stirring) for 12 months.

Tasting Notes

2009 Smith Haut Lafitte Blanc has an attractive brilliant yellow colour. The nose is quite delicate with floral overtones. Its full aromatic potential is released with aeration, revealing hints of yellow fruit (vineyard peaches, apricot), flowers (honeysuckle, broom flowers), and a touch of flint. The wine starts out straightforward on the palate, filling out to become rich and powerful (this is undoubtedly a food wine). The aftertaste is delightfully flavoursome, with yellow fruit (mango, apricot, and candied pineapple), sweet spice, and gunflint. The finish is quite long and delicious, and the wine is altogether rich and savoury.

Production

2,500 cases made

Cellaring

Drink 2012-2032

Scores/Awards

93 points - James Molesworth, Wine Spectator - March 31, 2012

93-96 points - James Suckling, Wine Spectator - Web Only 2010

98 points - Robert Parker, Wine Advocate #199 - February 2012

93 points - Neal Martin, Wine Journal - January 2012

89-91 points - Neal Martin, Wine Journal - May 2010

93-95 points - Roger Voss, Wine Enthusiast - September 8, 2010

91-93 points - Ian D'Agata, ST's International Wine Cellar - May/June 2010

17 points - Jancis Robinson, JancisRobinson.com - April 20, 2010

17.5 points - Chris Kissack, The Wine Doctor - May 2012



Scores/Awards **17.5-18.5+ points** - Chris Kissack, *The Wine Doctor* - March 2010
17.5 points/4 stars - Stephen Spurrier, *Decanter.com* - April 2010
94 points - Tim Atkin, MW - *timatkin.com* - April 2010

Reviews *"This is really gorgeous, with creamed Meyer lemon, meringue and lime chiffon notes leading the way, backed by pure salted butter, straw and warm shortbread flavors. Long and rich yet detailed and focused through the finish. Sauvignon Blanc, Sémillon and Sauvignon Gris. Drink now through 2022. 2,500 cases made."*
- JM, *Wine Spectator*

"Rich yet balanced with pineapple, sliced green apple and hints of citrus fruit with delicate cream undertones. Full, balanced and beautiful. Aniseed character as well, and fresh. Score range: 93-96"
- JS, *Wine Spectator*

"Smith-Haut-Lafitte hit a home run with their red Pessac-Leognan and came very close to perfection with their dry white Graves. Possibly the best dry white the estate has produced since the proprietors, the Cathiards, acquired the property in 1990, this wine exhibits a sensational fragrance of buttered citrus, honeyed melons and a touch of grapefruit, lemon zest and orange rind. It also displays grapefruit on the attack and mid-palate as well as real opulence, terrific acidity and length. Drink it over the next 15-20 years. Astonishing!"
- RP, *Wine Advocate*

"Tasted at the Union de Grand Cru in London. The nose is very refined with scents of apple-blossom, grapefruit, lanolin and orange sorbet. Fine delineation but very composed. The palate is well balanced with good acidity, quite taut at the moment with a precise, mineral-rich finish. Excellent. Tasted October 2011."
- NM, *Wine Journal*

"Tasted at the chateau. A blend of 90% Sauvignon Blanc, 5% Semillon and 5% Sauvignon Gris, this has a fresh nose of green apple, cold stone, just a touch of granite and smoke. Opening up nicely in the glass. The palate is very taut with notes of green apple, lime, apricot and green gage, just missing a little length towards the finish but it has a good weight and intensity and there is a hint of Mirabelle that develops on the nose that lends it another dimension. Fine. Tasted April 2010"
- NM, *Wine Journal*

"93-95 Barrel sample. Finely balanced wine, just the right fresh, herbaceous fruit to go with the ripe, fat texture and a delicious squeeze of lemon. Ginger adds to the mix."
- RV, *Wine Enthusiast*

"Medium-deep straw-yellow with a hint of gold. Deep, rich aromas of ripe citrus, beeswax and ginger. Enters the mouth creamy and almost sweet, with ripe tangerine, cantaloupe and fresh lime flavors. Then long and rather full-bodied on the back end, finishing with a refreshing mineral quality. For my money, this is one of the deepest and most complex white Smith Haut Lafitte's of recent memory and one of the dry white wine stars of the 2009 vintage. This should be delicious upon release and offer pleasure anytime over the next 15 years."
- ID, *International Wine Cellar*

"Slightly greener tint than most. Rich and quite complex on the nose. Very broad flavours. Hint of pineapple. Lots of satisfaction and lip smacking with a nice undertow of minerality. Lots there. Tastes as though it had almost been stroked by the winemaker. Quite a bit of alcohol though. Pape Clément?? Date tasted 2nd April 2010. Drink 2011-2016."
- JR, *JancisRobinson.com*

"Some nice notes of evolution here, not as expressive as the 2011 but showing a much more attractive polish to the fruit, even the barest suggestion of honeyed richness here. The palate is supple and rounded, rich, with plenty of substance, but a lower acidity than the 2011 so it doesn't have the same lift. Attractive but rather subdued in comparison. Interesting flavours though, white flowers, blanched almonds and citrus zest too. Overall a very good wine. From a Grand Cru Classé Tasting. 17.5/20 (May 2012)"
- CK, *The Wine Doctor*

Reviews *"Great fruit character here, ripe and open as is often the case with this estate since the Cathiards took control, with some exotic tinges to it as well. A soft style on the palate though, lovely fleshy and creamy fruit, broad with great depth and a gritty substance. There is a decent acid core to it as well. An impressive structure here. Very*

good. From my 2009 Bordeaux primeur assessment. 17.5-18.5+/20 (March 2010)"
- CK, *The Wine Doctor*

"Lemon yellow, very good florality and a slightly exotic touch with fleshiness added to the vibrant fruit and very good vineyard ripeness, a wine of ripeness that will show finesse and depth. Drink 2013-18."
- SS, *Decanter.com*

"Well up to the standard of recent vintages, this stand out Pessac-Léognan is as good as Domaine du Chevalier in 2009, which is high praise indeed. This is stylish and aromatic, with hints of fresh toast and minerally, match-stick reduction for added complexity. A wine with freshness, poise and ageing potential. Something to drink while you wait for your 2009 reds to mature. 5+ years."
- TA, *timatkin.com*
