

Château Smith Haut Lafitte Blanc 2015

CSPC# 749828

750mlx12

13.0 % alc./vol.

Grape Variety

90% Sauvignon Blanc, 5% Semillon, 5% Sauvignon Gris

Appellation

Pessac-Léognan

Classification

Grand Vin de Graves

Website

www.smith-haut-lafitte.com

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 2015 vintage was grown in perfect weather conditions, with an exceptionally sunny and dry month of June, high temperatures in July and August, and a few showers just when the vine needed it the most. The 2015 vintage joins the exclusive realms of the greatest years at the estate.

Vineyards

11 hectares being planted to white, specifically 90% Sauvignon Blanc, 5% Sauvignon Gris and 5% Semillon. The average vine age is 38 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.

The Cathiards have invested millions in the estate's vineyard, applying organic winemaking across the 78 hectares (67 planted to red, 11 to white). Technical director Fabien Teitgen's buzzword is "bio-precision," an approach that combines low-intervention, almost entirely biodynamic viticulture with satellite technology that reveals how the grapes have ripened.

Harvest

Harvest started late on the 18th of September with the first in-field sorting on some plots of young Sauvignon blanc vines. The heart of the harvest for the Sauvignons blancs started on the 23rd of September to finish on the 30th with the old vine's plots with beautiful maturity and complexity. We picked the Semillons on the 30th of September and 1st of October. The rain coming back during the last days of September made us sort more thoroughly the last plots picked.

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

Straight from the first nose, this wine brings us toward an aromatic palette of white fruits and flowers: citrus fruits, white peaches, pears and acacia flowers. Then aeration reveals spicier aromas of star anise and eucalyptus. After a tense and vivid attack, the mouth of concentration and power appears very well-balanced with a beautiful smooth texture. This fresh and elegant wine offers after citrus fruits some white flesh fruits, sweet spices and very complex notes of flint stones and fireplace, characteristic of our gravel terroirs.

Serve with

Asian style salads, Asian-style pork tenderloin with noodles & lime peanut dressing; BBQ lobster; Avocado & papaya salad.

Production

2,500 cases made.

Cellaring

Drink 2018-2028

Scores/Awards

96 points - James Molesworth, Wine Spectator - March 31, 2018

95-98 points - James Molesworth, Wine Spectator - Web Only 2016

91-93 points - Neal Martin, Wine Advocate #224 - April 2016

92 points - Neal Martin, Wine Journal - March 2018

96-97 points - James Suckling, JamesSuckling.com - April 2016



Scores/Awards **94 points** - Roger Voss, Wine Enthusiast - April 2018
94-96 points - Roger Voss, Wine Enthusiast - April 2016
17.5 points - Julia Harding, JancisRobinson.com - October 2017
17 points - Jancis Robinson, JancisRobinson.com - April 2016
96 points - Decanter.com - April 2016
96 points - Jane Anson, Decanter.com - November 2017
97 points - Jeff Leve, thewinecellarinsider.com - May 2018
96 points - Jeff Leve, thewinecellarinsider.com - March 2018
95 points - Jeff Leve, thewinecellarinsider.com - July 2017
95 points - Jeff Leve, thewinecellarinsider.com - April 2016
95-96+ points - Jeremy Williams, winewordsandvideotape.com - March 2016
94 points - Tim Atkin, MW - timatkin.com - April 2016
16 points - Farr Vintner - March 2016
91-93 points - Derek Smedley, MW - April 2016
95 points - Jeannie Cho Lee MW, asianpalate.com - May 2016
95 points - Antonio Galloni, Vinous - February 2018
92-95 points - Antonio Galloni, Vinous - April 2016
96 points - Jeb Dunnuck MW - February 2018
18.5+ points - Matthew Jukes, MW - April 2016
93-95 points - Falstaff Magazine (score only) - May 2016
18 points - La Revue du Vin France (score only) - June 2016

Reviews *"Piercing and pure, with vibrant honeysuckle and chamomile flower notes followed by grapefruit, lemon and white peach flavors. The finish ripples with energy, while fleur de sel and gooseberry accents fill in. Terrific length. Best from 2019 through 2029. 2,500 cases made."*
- JM, Wine Spectator

"This is a breed apart, featuring a wide range of verbena, chamomile and honeysuckle notes on the floral side, flavors of lemon curd, white peach and star fruit at the core, and a long finish that ripples with salted butter, brioche and acacia details. Beautiful. Score range: 95-98"
- JM, Wine Spectator

"Pure Sauvignon Blanc made from the young vines at Smith-Haut-Lafitte, the 2015 Les Hauts de Smith has a tensile, oyster shell tinged bouquet with yellow flowers and pink grapefruit developing in the glass. The palate is well balanced, tensile with a keen thread of acidity: plenty of citrus lemon, lime and tinned apricot leading to a smooth and refined finish. It just misses a little length, but you won't mind because you'll already be taking the next sip. What a gem of a white Pessac-Léognan - don't overlook this."
- NM, Wine Advocate

"The Les Hauts de Smith 2015 Blanc, which is pure Sauvignon Blanc, has a crisp gooseberry and wet stone-scented bouquet, traces of grilled walnut and smoke emerging with aeration but remaining discrete. The palate is very well balanced with a crisp line of acidity, lightly spiced on the entry with a citrus, mineral finish that offers a distant tang of the sea. I like the energy and the focus of this wine. Excellent."
- NM, Wine Journal

"A beautiful white with pretty density and richness. Bright and clear with intense aromas and flavors of lilacs and stones. Some violet. Full and bright. Firm phenolic tension. Bright acidity."
- JS, JamesSuckling.com

"Tight and firm, this young wine has great potential. The richness, good acidity and minerality promise a great future. Densely textured, it is powerful and very rich. Drink from 2024."
- RV, Wine Enthusiast

"94-96. Barrel Sample. Ripe and full, this wine is also finely balanced. Its generous yellow and white stone fruits are cut with tight acidity and an intense fragrance. It will age well."
- RV, Wine Enthusiast

Reviews *“Rich cedary nose. Spicy and mealy and still bright with citrus fruit. Gorgeous and balanced. Full and long. (JH) “
- JH, JancisRobinson.com*

“5% 24-year-old Sauvignon Gris, 5% Sémillon, the rest Sauvignon Blanc - used to be 100% Sauvignon Blanc. Ploughed by horses for the last 15 years. They still have eight horses, boasted winemaker Fabien. 'Too many,' muttered co-owner Florence Cathiard. Fabien stopped skin maceration about four years ago to make the wine last longer.

*Broad and rich. Perfumed. Quite rich. Long and broad.”
- JR, JancisRobinson.com*

“Incredible intensity thanks to almost no lees stirring and no cold soaking, instead vinified on the limit of reduction – they now only stir the lees when the reductive aromas are threatening to go too far. Instead they focus on harvest date and a short but firm pressing. Whatever they are doing, it works. Huge length, sweetness, tension and density; it gives you a lovely salinity on the finish, and always that Smith Haut Lafitte flourish. This truly stands out among the 2015 whites. From a blend of 90% Sauvignon Blanc, 5% Sauvignon Gris (on gravelly soils) and 5% Semillon.”

-Decanter.com

“This is a great white wine, although not quite up to the standard set by the red in this vintage. It starts fairly undemonstratively, but it quickly builds in power, density and texture, and the salinity on the finish gives a welcome kick. It has grip and flesh, with peach juice and nectarine flavours. Currently undergoing biodynamic conversion. (JA)”

- JA, Decanter.com

“Honeysuckle, vanilla, yellow citrus peel and hints of orange fruits, there is left, energy and length here. The long, finish grabs you with its sweet, fresh, citrus, clay and tropical profile. Rich, long, fresh and expressive, this is just great and will only get better!”

- JL, thewinecellarinsider.com

“A mélange of orange yellow citrus fruits, with accents of lime, papaya, vanilla and floral scents on the nose are the first things you notice. Richly textured, with layers of citrus fruits, honeydew melon and hints of tropical fruits fill up your palate. The wine is vibrant, long, sweet and fresh.”

- JL, thewinecellarinsider.com

“Bright, crisp, fresh, vibrant, yellow, citrus fruit with a hit of vanilla, flowers, stone and honey to complicate matters. Full bodied, round and lush, drink it young, or age it, either way, this is really quite nice.”

- JL, thewinecellarinsider.com

“Ripe, vibrant, zesty citrus, honeysuckle and vanilla with a lingering touch of honey and vanilla bean in the finish, this wine leaves an enjoyable, lasting impression. The wine reached 13.75% Alcohol with a pH of 3.2. The wine was made from a blend of 90% Sauvignon Blanc, 5% Sauvignon Gris and 5% Semillon. The harvest took place from August 31 to September 19.”

- JL, thewinecellarinsider.com

“Silver; really sparkles in the glass; melon; white peach; seductive aromatics; lovely ripe palate; beautiful; lovely balance; harvest started 1st September; estate comparing this to the 2010; minerality on the finish. A delicious beauty. Has freshness too. [90% Sauvignon Blanc, 5% Sauvignon Gris, 5% Sémillon, 11ha for white, 50% new oak]. Drink 2019-2027. 95-96+”

- JW, winewordsandvideotape.com

“Picked over a period of three weeks to achieve extra complexity, this is a delicious white blend, combining stone fruit opulence with saline acidity, smoky oak and mouth-coating texture. It’s at the riper end of the spectrum in 2015, but has plenty of freshness, too.

Drink: 2017-30”

- TA, timatkin.com

Reviews *"The mix of citrus fruits is fresh the nose bright, but it fills out in the middle rich ripe pineapple a hint of apricot the sweet fruit underpinned by lime freshness. Light and floral on the back palate the finish long with a mix of fresh fruits."*

- Derek Smedley MW

"A gorgeous white with lovely layers of flavors - apricots, pomelo, star fruits and fresh herbs. The wine has both intensity and wonderful freshness and a long length. This is one of the top whites from Bordeaux in this vintage."

- JCL, asianpalate.com

"11 hectares at Smith Haut Lafitte are planted with white varieties - 90% Sauvignon Blanc, 5% Sauvignon Gris and 5% Semillon. Honeyed melon and red apples on the nose here. The palate is ripe and creamy with tarte tatin, passionflower and a hint of mint overlaying spicy coriander and wood smoke from the new oak. The texture builds an oily fatness to pair with the crisp acidity, allowing this wine to finish ripe, smooth and long."

- Farr Vintners

"In 2015 Smith Haut Lafitte Blanc is rich, sumptuous and incredibly inviting, with no hard edges and fabulous balance. Even with all of its obvious intensity, the 2015 retains a good bit of freshness. Naturally, the 2015 leans toward the richer end of the spectrum in 2015, yet all of the signatures are very much in place. The aromatics aren't fully expressive. It will be interesting to see what time brings. (AG)"

- AG, Vinous

"The 2015 Smith Haut Lafitte Blanc is powerful and intense, but also incredibly young at this stage. There is notable density and persistence throughout, but just like the red Grand Vin, the aromatic dimension in the wine has not yet developed. The wine's length and overall density are both impressive. Here, too, the en primeur samples were less expressive than the wines were when I tasted the separate lots from barrel in January 2016. With a bit of air, the flavors start to brighten and bristle with pure energy. The blend is 90% Sauvignon Blanc, 5% Sémillon and 5% Sauvignon Gris"

- AG, Vinous

"It is a star. More luxurious and much finer than the others, this is outstanding, silky and suave with incredible energy and moments of tender citrus fruit among the power and pomp."

- MJ, matthewjukes.com

"I was able to taste the 2015 Smith Haut Lafitte Blanc twice and it showed beautifully on both occasions. Based on 90% Sauvignon Blanc and the balance Sémillon and Sauvignon Gris, aged in plenty of new wood, this ripe, sexy 2015 knocks it out of the park with its citrus oil, caramelized lemons, tangerine and honeysuckle aromatics. This palate doesn't lose a beat either and is full-bodied and concentrated, with vibrant acidity and blockbuster length. I'd drink bottles over the coming 10-15 years, yet I suspect it will keep longer. It's in the top 2-3 whites of the vintage."

- Jeb Dunnuck
