

Château Smith Haut Lafitte Blanc 2020

CSPC# 855512

750mlx6

13.5% alc./vol.

Grape Variety 90% Sauvignon Blanc, 5% Sauvignon Gris, 5% Sémillon
Appellation Pessac-Léognan
Classification Grand Vin de Graves
Website <https://www.smith-haut-lafitte.com>

Sustainability Organic, since 2019.

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.

Winemaker Fabien Teitgen

Vintage The earliest vintage in the past ten years, 2020 began with a mild and rainy winter, favouring bud break three weeks early and an accelerated growth of the vegetation in the spring. The frost of March 27 damaged the buds and impacted the yields of the whites. While heavy rainfall marked the period between late May and early June, the particularly hot month of July was followed by a very dry month of August. The deep rooting of the vines, which are 40 years old on average, coupled with regular ploughing, have made it possible to fight against severe water stress. The lenient weather conditions at the end of August and the beginning of September allowed for the harvest of perfectly ripe grapes in good sanitary condition, 3 weeks in advance, which is a record in the history of the property.

Winemaker's Notes The first part of the year was aquatic," commented Winemaker Fabien Teitgen. "The vines began to grow very early, on March 8th. But after we had good flowering. There was some mildew, but there was not too much damage. Because we are organic and biodynamic, we can only use very little copper mixed with plant infusions. This is the phytotherapy part of biodynamics. We try lots of things and we keep what works. When you are certified, you have to work very fast, even on Saturday and Sunday. Our workers live close by and are very dedicated. "We were not so much impacted by the drought. It's true, the summer was very dry. But the first part of the year gave water to store in our deep clays. The second part of the year was very sunny and warm. Even where our clay is five to six meters down, this gave us the ability to continue the ripening process. We have an early terroir with this storage of water. We ended harvest before the end of September. "The Cabernet berries were very small—we would have liked to have had a little more juice. By the time we were picking the Cabernet, the rain came. There was no bursting (of berries) for us. The timing of the water was good. Then, we had to be very careful with the extraction—there was a lot of tannin. So, we did much less pigéage. There is no press wine in the blend this year. "It was really a great pleasure to do this vintage. The grapes were very expressive straightaway of the wines. The aromas in the winery were incredible.

Vineyards 11 hectares being planted to white, specifically 90% Sauvignon Blanc, 5% Sauvignon Gris and 5% Semillon. The average vine age is 38years, on the usual 101.14 and 3309 rootstocks, and planting density is between 7500 and 10000 vines per hectare. The soil is 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 August 20, one of earliest on record, through to September 9th.



Vinification/ Maturation	Manual harvest in small crates. Pressing inert. Fermentation in French oak barrels. The grapes are hand-picked into small crates and pressed in an oxygen-free environment using inert gas to retain the grapes' aromatic potential, followed by fermentation in French oak barrels and cold settling. Ageing: 12 months on the lees in barrels (50% new + 50% previously used for one vintage) from our own on-site cooperage.
Tasting Notes	The wine is pale yellow. The nose is already very expressive with notes of yellow fruits (peach, apricot), white flowers (acacias, orange blossom), and a beautiful elegance of citrus fruits. The aromatic on the palate is similar to the one on the nose with yellow fruits, floral notes, and we perceive a greater complexity with more mineral, spicy notes while flint stones give the signature of our great terroir.
Serve with	Asian style salads, Asian-style pork tenderloin with noodles & lime peanut dressing; BBQ lobster; Avocado & papaya salad.
Production	2,400 cases made
Cellaring	Drink 2023-2030
Scores/Awards	<p>95 points - James Molesworth, Wine Spectator - March 2023</p> <p>94 points - William Kelley, Wine Advocate - April 2023</p> <p>94-96+ points - Lisa Perrotti-Brown, Wine Advocate - May 2021</p> <p>96 points - Lisa Perrotti-Brown, The Wine Independent (score only) - March 2023</p> <p>95-96 points - James Suckling, JamesSuckling.com - May 2021</p> <p>96-98 points - Roger Voss, Wine Enthusiast - June 2021</p> <p>17 points - Richard Hemmings, JancisRobinson.com - April 2021</p> <p>17.5 points - Jancis Robinson, JancisRobinson.com - April 2021</p> <p>96 points - Georgina Hindle, Decanter.com - January 2023</p> <p>96 points - Jane Anson, Decanter.com - May 2021</p> <p>97 points - Jane Anson, Insidebordeaux.com - December 2022</p> <p>96 points - Jeff Leve, thewinecellarinsider.com - March 2023</p> <p>97 points - Jeff Leve, thewinecellarinsider.com - May 2021</p> <p>93-95 points - Farr Vintners - April 2020</p> <p>92-94 points - Neal Martin, Vinous - May 2021</p> <p>95 points - Antonio Galloni, Vinous - February 2023</p> <p>93-95 points - Antonio Galloni, Vinous - June 2021</p> <p>100 points - Jeb Dunnuck MW - March 2023</p> <p>19+ points - Matthew Jukes - April 2021</p> <p>96 points - Jean Marc Quarin (score only) - April 2021</p> <p>95 points - Peter Moser, Falstaff Magazine - May 2021</p> <p>95 points - Andreas Larsson, Tasted - May 2021</p> <p>93-94 points - La Revue du Vin France (score only) - January 2022</p> <p>94-95 points - Bettane & Desselave (score only) - July 2021</p>
Reviews	<p><i>"Suave and caressing in feel, this drapes beautifully, with creamed yellow apple, gooseberry, and lemon curd notes on the flattering side, offset by hints of tarragon, blanched almond, and salted butter on the racier side. The finish is enhanced with paraffin and smoke hints. Sauvignon Blanc, Sémillon and Sauvignon Gris. Drink now through 2030. 2,400 cases made."</i></p> <p>- JM, Wine Spectator</p> <p><i>"A strong effort, the 2020 Smith Haut Lafitte Blanc wafts from the glass with aromas of nectarine, pear, lemongrass, Sauvignon botanicals, toasted bread, and baking spices. Medium to full-bodied, satiny, and layered, it's rich and concentrated, with ripe acids and chalky structuring extract. It's not quite as vibrant and precise as the 2019, but it's a success nonetheless."</i></p> <p>- WK, Wine Advocate</p> <p><i>"The 2020 Smith Haut Lafitte Blanc is fermented with indigenous yeasts in French oak, 50% new, within which it will age for 12 months on lees with bâtonnage before spending a further two to three months in tank. It prances out of the glass with vivacious notes of lime blossoms, Golden Delicious apples, and green mango, plus hints of coriander seed, shaved ginger and wet pebbles. The medium-bodied palate possesses lovely harmony even at this nascent stage, featuring bright apple and citrus flavors with soft acidity and a chalky finish. It is clear from tasting the range of wines from Smith Haut Lafitte that they were indeed situated in a sweet-spot location and possessing just the right sort of terroir to hit the absolute heights of greatness this vintage has to offer, with all the hurdles skillfully managed by Teitgen and his team. These wines are truly breathtaking. Bravo!"</i></p> <p>- LPB, Wine Advocate</p>

- Reviews** *"A tight, phenolic white with light tannins that give the wine form and balance. It's full-bodied and lightly chewy with dried apple, lemon, and peach. Minerally and chewy. Flavorful."*
- JS, JamesSuckling.com
- "This is a beautiful white wine in its balance and in its elegantly textured fruit and acidity. With richness balanced by the wine's crisp green fruits, there is complexity and depth here that gives the wine great intensity. For long-term aging. Barrel Sample: 96-98."*
- RV, Wine Enthusiast
- "Creamy, generous style where the Sauvignon is ripe rather than herbal, which works well. Succulent acidity still gives refreshment on the finish. Drinkable now but has a decade of potential too."*
- RH, JancisRobinson.com
- "Full bottle 1,355 g. Cask sample taken 22 April. Harvest started 20 August but only ever until 11 am. Then they stopped to wait for acid levels to drop a little. Plot-by-plot picking. 45 parcels in 11 ha. 50% new oak. Pioneer of biodynamics and sustainability in Bordeaux. Hugely seductive nose as usual. None of the obvious skinniness of Sauvignon Blanc. This is rich yet tangy on the nose and tastes as though it has quite a portion of Sémillon in the blend. Lanolin richness on the nose. Some richness on palate entry gives way to really fantastic vibrancy on the palate. Very much in the house style and a real triumph. Hint of mint. Already pretty gorgeous. Long. Drink 2022 – 2032."*
- JR, JancisRobinson.com
- "Butterscotch, vanilla, a soft honeyed caramel, lemon, and orange notes with green apple. Quite bitter straight away, the lemon and orange rind and grapefruit juice elements all to the fore alongside a hit of bright, lemon juice acidity. Then it settles, almost closes, or narrows into a funnel, quite tight and sleek, definite tension there, but there's power and structure still with elegance. It's not giving, generous and approachable right now but this has been well made - really focused and polished. Body, freshness, and structure with lovely hints of minerality and such a wide aerial, aerated finish. It's serious - this is bold but with something so special about it. Ageing 50% new oak, 50% one year old barrels, 12 months with three months in vats before bottling."*
- GH, Decanter.com
- "This brings together depth and power, concentrated and hugely saline right from the start. Rich in texture, with layers of stone fruits from nectarines to white peaches, with a steely edge that squeezes through the fruit, holds interest, and adds persistency. A delicious white wine with a point of bitterness on the finish adding another dimension. Average yields 29hl/ha for the whites. 50% new oak. Harvest started August 20, one of earliest on record, through to September 9th. Certified organic (AB) as of 2019 in the vineyard."*
- JA, Decanter.com
- "Intense and complex from the first nose, with sharp-edged citrus that widens to creamy white peach, nectarine, and pear through the mid palate, then kicks back up with bitter almond on the finish, giving the impression of separate textures and characters playing off each other. This is salivating and totally engrossing, with cold ash, chimney soot and gun smoke coming in waves as it opens, with oyster shell salinity. 29hl/ha yield, 50% new oak barrels for ageing, with a few months back in stainless steel tanks before bottling. Harvest August 20 to September 9, one of the earliest on record. Certified organic as of 2019 in the vineyard, fully biodynamic farming as of this 2020 vintage. An up score from En Primeur, a lovely wine from technical director Fabien Teitgen."*
- JA, Inside Bordeaux
- "Rich, lush and creamy, with an alluring bouquet of honeysuckle, lemon rind, white peach, vanilla, and honeyed lemon peel, this is going to be simply fabulous on release, providing pleasure for over a decade. Drink from 2023-2034."*
- JL, thewinecellarinsider.com

Reviews

“With the pop of grapefruit, white peach, lemon peel, flowers, orange rind and honeysuckle in the nose, and a creamy, sweet, fresh, juicy, slightly honeyed, lush, white peach and citrus finish, you have all the ingredients needed for a luscious, white Bordeaux wine. The wine was produced from a blend of 90% Sauvignon Blanc, 5% Sauvignon Gris and 5% Semillon.”

- JL, thewinecellarinsider.com

“The yields this year are 29hl/ha, with the blend 90% Sauvignon Blanc and equal parts Sémillon and Sauvignon Gris. The wine will spend a year in 50% new french oak with frequent lees stirring. Creamy and generous on the nose, with lemon curd, peach, and apricot. The palate is glossy and ripe, fleshy peaches and Amalfi lemons dominating the fruit core. The oak is a prominent feature, but it still finds balance thanks to the intensity of fruit, which lingers on a long and fine finish.”

- Farr Vintners

“The 2020 Smith Haut Lafitte Blanc was cropped at 29hl/ha and aged in 60% new oak barrels. It takes its time to unfurl on the nose, toying with the olfactory senses before revealing attractive honeysuckle, yellow flowers, jasmine, melon, and very subtle chamomile scents, gaining intensity with aeration. The palate is very well balanced with an intense, concentrated opening, a little more viscous in texture than the Le Petit Haut Lafitte, deeper and a touch spicier. Veins of lemongrass and stem ginger appear toward the finish. This should drink well for 15–20 years. One of the best dry whites of the vintage.”

- NM, Vinous

“The 2020 Smith Haut Lafitte Blanc is superb. Élevage has done wonders in lending energy and brilliance. The 2020 shows the soft curves of the warm vintage, but it has tons of energy, too. That makes for a brilliant, compelling white that delivers on so many levels. The 2020 offers enough approachability to drink well now, but also the energy to develop well in bottle for many years to come. Best After 2023.”

- AG, Vinous

“The 2020 Smith Haut Lafitte Blanc is compelling. Soft, silky, and caressing, the 2020 is all charm and seduction. Ripe pear, apricot, white flowers, mint, and a touch of new oak are all deftly woven together. Best of all, the 2020 will drink well pretty much upon release. It's a gorgeous wine in the making.”

- AG, Vinous

“Lastly, and pure perfection in white wine, the 2020 Château Smith Haut Lafitte Blanc is based on 90% Sauvignon Blanc, 5% Sauvignon Gris and 5% Semillon that was aged in 50% new oak. This massively rich, concentrated, powerful white offers a heavenly nose of honeyed flowers, orange marmalade, lemon grass, and toasted bread, with a building sense of salinity and minerality that shows on the finish. Drink this stunningly rich, layered, concentrated 2020 over the coming two decades.”

- Jeb Dunnuck

“This is outstanding, with tremendous depth and broad swathes of citrus, almond, brioche, and pineapple husk from start to finish and while this is a full-framed wine it is also one with epic balance from start to finish. The control and delivery of oak on display here is of the highest order and this wine can sit alongside any other from Bordeaux and most of the top candidates from Burgundy, too, such is its class. The acid and tension here are both thrilling, and it will no doubt age extremely well, too.”

- Matthew Jukes

“Light yellow-green, silver reflections. Fine spicy nuances, vanilla notes, ripe peach, pineapple, a hint of mint and lemon balm. Juicy, elegant, and balanced, fine white stone fruit, has finesse yet is richly structured, mineral, salty, white pepper on the finish, light-footed and well-balanced. Well worth keeping for a few years.”

- PM, Falstaff Magazine

“Ripe and intense nose with modest oak, passion fruit, pineapple, fresh herbs, and lemongrass. The palate has density and weight yet with a bright freshness, fine oak balance and a long powerful finish.”

- AL, Tasted.com
