

Château Smith Haut Lafitte Rouge 2014

CSPC# 749551

750mlx12

13.6% alc./vol.

Grape Variety	62% Cabernet Sauvignon, 30% Merlot, 6% Cabernet Franc, 2% Petit Verdot
Appellation	Pessac-Léognan
Classification	Grand Cru Classe
Website	http://www.smith-haut-lafitte.com/en/smith-haut-lafitte-vin-rouge.html
General Info	<p>Château Smith-Haut-Lafite 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.</p> <p>In July 2011, Chateau Smith Haut Lafitte purchased a majority of the vineyard property belonging to the neighboring estate, Chateau Le Thil. Out of the 42.5 acres of vines, 28.7 acres, the chateau and 20 acres of parkland went to Smith Haut Lafitte. Much of that land is located next to Smith Haut Lafitte and was actually part of the original estate that was owned by Lodi Duffour Dubergier. In essence, this reunited the original vineyards. Le Thil belonged to his nephew, from whom the de Laitre family is descended. The remaining vineyard land was sold to Les Carmes Haut Brion.</p>
Vintage	2014 was marked by an extraordinary Indian summer that saved the vintage. Fine spring weather was conducive to a good start to the growing season. However, challenging summer conditions seriously slowed down ripening. Fortunately, the month of September was absolutely beautiful, with dry, extremely sunny weather accompanied by highs of close to 30°C. This superb weather, with cool night-time temperatures, enabled the grapes to ripen beautifully, and they were able to be brought into the vat house having reached a perfect level of ripeness.
Vineyards	The 55 hectares of vineyards are located on a gravel ridge to the east of Château Haut-Bailly. The red wine is a blend of Cabernet Sauvignon (55%), Merlot (35%) and Cabernet Franc (10%). Average vine age is 38 years
Harvest	<p>After a first picking day of young vines on the 25th of September, the true harvest started in very good weather conditions on the 4th of October with the Merlots; the juices offered good balances and beautiful aromatic freshness. The weekend of the 6th and 7th of October, with no previous warning sign, a warm and humid depression, of tropical type, troubled our tranquility: mushroom started to be found in the property woods... and botrytis spots appeared.</p> <p>Sure of the proper maturity of our grapes, we decided to take immediate measures to react to these weather conditions and called in 200 harvesters. The harvest pace doubled, allowing us to qualitatively pick the grapes before they could be affected. Our very selective harvest reception area (de-stemming through vibration, both optical and manual sorting) assured us the perfect quality of the grapes transferred to the vats: no botrytised grape could have passed through this draconian process... Under that sustained pace, harvest finished on the 17th of October with the Cabernet Francs.</p>
Vinification/ Maturation	<p>Whole uncrushed grape berries fermented in small oak vats at 28°C and extraction with manual <i>pigeage</i> (punching down the cap). Aged in barrel on the lees for 18 months (65% of the new barrels were made at the estate's own cooperage), and only racked once. Duration of ageing adjusted to each wine.</p> <p>Aged in barrel on the lees for 18 months (60% new barrels, made at the estate's own cooperage) and only racked once. Duration of ageing was adjusted to each wine.</p>
Production	10,000 cases made
Cellaring	Drink 2019-2035



Scores/Awards **94 points** - James Molesworth, Wine Spectator - March 31, 2017
93-96 points - James Molesworth, Wine Spectator - Web Only 2015
92-94 points - Neal Martin, Wine Advocate #218 - April 29, 2015
96 points - James Suckling, Wine Spectator - February 2017
95-96 points - James Suckling, JamesSuckling.com - March 2015
96 points / Cellar Selection - Roger Voss, Wine Enthusiast - April 1, 2017
94-96 points - Roger Voss, Wine Enthusiast - March 1, 2015
16-17 points - Jancis Robinson, JancisRobinson.com - April 2015
94 points - Decanter.com - June 2015
95 points - Jeff Leve, thewinecellarinsider.com - February 2017
93-94 points - Jeff Leve, thewinecellarinsider.com - April 2015
92-94 points - Jeremy Williams, winewordsandvideotape.com - March 2015
95 points - Tim Atkin, MW - timatkin.com - April 2015
16.5+ points - Farr Vintner - March 2015
89-93 points - Derek Smedley, MW - April 2015
92 points - Jeannie Cho Lee MW, asianpalate.com - March 2015
94 points - Antonio Galloni, Vinous - February 2017
93-96 points - Antonio Galloni, Vinous - April 2015
93-95 points - Falstaff Magazine (score only)
18 points - La Revue du Vin France (score only)
17.5 points - Bettane & Desseauve (score only)
17 points - Gault & Millau (score only)

Reviews *"This has a generous feel, with ripe fig, boysenberry and blueberry compote fruit flavors that are entwined with alluring roasted apple wood, melted licorice and warm fruitcake notes. The broad, mouthcoating finish has a terrific graphite underpinning to stay honest. Best from 2020 through 2035. 10,000 cases made."*
 - JM, Wine Spectator

"This has nice spine, with a persistent graphite and ganache character that runs through the core of dark plum and black currant fruit. The grip is well-embedded and there's lingering freshness despite the heft and depth. This will likely fill out more with time. Score range: 93-96"
 - JM, Wine Spectator

"The Château Smith Haut Lafitte 2014 is a blend of 62% Cabernet Sauvignon, 30% Merlot, 6% Cabernet Franc and 2% Petit Verdot, cropped at 35 hectoliters per hectare that is matured in 65% new barrels. There is a strong and persuasive marine influence on the nose, suggestions of iodine and seaweed infusing the black fruit that is very well defined and nicely embroidered with the oak. The palate is medium bodied with edgy, slightly chalky tannin; saline in the mouth and linear, focused, quite penetrating finish. In a similar fashion to the Haut-Bailly, this is a more "athletic" Smith Haut Lafitte, but one that allows the terroir to come through and be articulated. This is a stylish "S.H.L." from talented winemaker Fabien Teitgen."
 - NM, Wine Advocate

"A big black-cherry and bitter-chocolate nose leads into a rich, concentrated palate, where the fruit easily holds sway over the powerful, dry tannins. It's these that drive everything along right through to the assertive, slightly earthy finish; impressive long-term stuff!"
 - JS, JamesSuckling.com

"This is a very muscular style of Smith Haut Lafitte with great bio-precision that equates to intense flavors and textures. Mineral, stone, blueberry and wet earth. Long, persistent and solid. A classic Bordeaux style yet rich and exact."
 - JS, JamesSuckling.com

"This is a powerful wine, made to age for a long time, from this estate which is performing in top gear. Complex tannins and dark fruits both make their presence felt. It has weight, ripeness and a dense structure. A great success, it is unlikely to be ready to drink before 2027."
 - RV, Wine Enthusiast

Reviews *"94–96. Barrel Sample. This is a powerful, dark fruited wine, with firm tannins and a dense texture of solid, dry tannins that gives weight. A freshness comes through at the end, making this a finely balanced wine."*

- RV, Wine Enthusiast

"The oak is a bit too obvious on the nose at this point and the fruit is pretty chunky and maybe a bit too vigorously extracted. Rather a heavy hand. But it certainly makes its mark. And it's impressively persistent."

- JR, JancisRobinson.com

"They have so nailed the 'full extraction without making it obvious' trick at this property. Clearly high oak and firm tannins but rich, enrobed, black coffee and rich damson fruit, will age well, get really fine tannic structure, but with the slightly glamorous house style, the Mouton of Pessac-Leognan. Lovely. The vibrancy and integrity of the fruit from their biodynamic/organic work in the vineyard is very clear."

- Decanter.com

"Clearly better in the bottle, than when last tasted in barrel, the wine has gained complexity, depth and softness. Full bodied, fleshy and concentrated, with loads of juicy, sweet, ripe, fresh, dark fruits, smoke, licorice and oak, 4-6 years of bottle age will add a lot to this already tasty wine."

- JL, thewinecellarinsider.com

"With a deep color and a spicy-fruit-cigar-box sensation, the black and red fruits really shine through. There is a plush character to the texture with newness and lift, a touch of oak and sweet, ripe, spicy berries in the finish. From a blend of 62% Cabernet Sauvignon, 39% Merlot, 6% Cabernet Franc and 2% Petit Verdot, the wine reached 13.7% alcohol with a pH of 3.7. 93-94 Pts"

- JL, thewinecellarinsider.com

"2014 Deep and saturated; ripe cassis; some strawberry notes; blackcurrant cassis again; tight palate jam packed with fruit; clean and precise; very attractive fruit tones; nice freshness and acidity on the finish. Plenty of matter on the chewy finish. Will be very good. [62% Cabernet Sauvignon, 30% Merlot, 6% Cabernet Franc, 2% Petit Verdot]. Drink 2020-2032. Tasted 1 April 2015. 92-94+"

- JW, winewordsandvideotape.com

"The Smith red used to be overshadowed by the white, but not anymore. Deeply coloured and profound, this is an intensely aromatic blend, with sweet, perfumed oak, bold flavours, a supporting cast of acidity and fruit richness and the potential to age. Not far behind Haut-Brion in terms of quality, if not style."

- TA, timatkin.com

"Daniel and Florence Cathiard transformed this property in the early 1990s and have been making very individual, sexy wines since then which combine flavours of classic earthy Graves with silky and seductive new oak from barrels produced by their in-house cooper. 59% Cabernet Sauvignon, 30% Merlot, 1% Petit Verdot. Deep ruby colour. Sweet, ripe black cherry and blackcurrant on the nose which has a seductive note of vanilla and nutmeg. The palate is succulent and ripe with a plush core of black fruits and high levels of glycerol. Smooth, velvety tannins giving a generous texture and mouthfeel. This will be a real crowd-pleaser with no hard edges but very good overall balance."

- Farr Vintners

"The nose has a mix of fragrances mainly fresh black fruits. The start of the palate seems fresh with a strong bilberry character, but it fills out in the middle rich fruit ripe tannins sweetness smooth and supple. 2023-30"

- Derek Smedley MW

"A discrete, quite restrained, elegant red with ripe tannins and dark berry fruit. There are savory herbs and spices on the finish. The wine is quiet and not that expressive at the moment, but the tannins are well managed and there is good flavor intensity on the mid-palate. A wine to watch as it evolves over the next decade."

- JCL, asianpalate.com

Reviews *“In 2014 Smith Haut Lafitte produced an exceptionally soft, sexy Grand Vin. Dark cherry, plum, tobacco, licorice, menthol and red-toned fruit are all nicely delineated, while expressive floral notes give the wine a closing flourish of aromatic intensity. The 2014 is quite pretty, if a touch slender. It will drink well with minimal cellaring given its soft contours and supple, inviting personality. The blend is 62% Cabernet Sauvignon, 30% Merlot, 6% Cabernet Franc and 2% Petit Verdot. (AG)”*
- AG, Vinous

“The 2014 Smith Haut Lafitte is quite supple and textured in the glass, with lovely understated richness and impeccable overall balance. The least expressive of the 2014s I tasted at the estate; the Grand Vin is all finesse. Silky tannins and distinctly red-hued fruit are two of the signatures in an exceptionally polished wine endowed with fabulous overall balance. Sweet floral and mint notes add striking aromatic lift. Quite simply, although the 2014 is magnificent, it is also far from obvious in style. This is about as refined a 2014 as I came across during the two weeks I spent in Bordeaux. The blend is 62% Cabernet Sauvignon, 30% Merlot, 6% Cabernet Franc and 2% Petit Verdot.”
- AG, Vinous
