

Château Smith Haut Lafitte Rouge 2018

CSPC# 866066

750mlx6

14.5% alc./vol.

Grape Variety	60% Cabernet Sauvignon, 34% Merlot, 4% Cabernet Franc, 2% Petit Verdot
Appellation	Pessac-Léognan
Classification	Grand Cru Classé
Website	http://www.smith-haut-lafitte.com/en/smith-haut-lafitte-vin-rouge.html
Sustainability	Conversion to Organic. Certified organic with the 2019 vintage.
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>
Winemaker	Fabien Teitgen
Vintage	<p>"2018 was quite a difficult year because of the wetness, wetness, wetness," Smith Haut Lafitte's winemaker Fabien Teitgen sighed. "We are organic growers, so we lost a bit to mildew. May to mid-June, it was very depressing. But the abrupt change in the weather was amazing. The very dry, sunny conditions gave fantastic evolution of the grapes. The berries were very fresh and fruity with thick skins." "We are very focused on the sorting," Teitgen continued. "We pick by hand, do an initial sorting using a vibrating table and then finish the sorting by hand. There was more work to be done on sorting the Merlot. We used no stems this year. We had enough tannin in the skins this year, so we didn't use the stems. Then, we had to take great care with the extraction. We just focused on extracting the round tannins, none of the harsh tannins. We had to stop fermentation as soon as we detected any bitterness."</p> <p>Average yields for the vintage were 21 hectoliters per hectare for the reds and 28 hectoliters per hectare for the whites. Tiny quantities, but the wines - and the grand vin in particular - are simply stunning.</p>
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	The harvest took place August 24-September 17, which is quite early for Smith Haut Lafitte. 2018 is a low yield vintage here at only 21 hectoliters per hectare due to hail and issues with mildew.
Vinification/ Maturation	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.
Tasting Notes	Very deep, intense black color. The nose is already expressive with a mix of red and black (blackberry, blackcurrant, cherry, raspberry) and spices, characteristic of perfectly ripe grapes. Swirling in the glass reveals considerable complexity with delicate floral notes, sweet spices, and gunflint. The wine starts out broad-based, concentrated, and powerful on the palate. The tannin is rich without compromising on freshness, balance, and delicate flavors. The expression "an iron first in a velvet glove" perfectly sums up this wine!
Serve with	Best served at 15.5 degrees Celsius. The cool, almost cellar temperature gives the wine more freshness and lift. Best served with all types of classic meat dishes, veal, pork, beef, lamb, duck, game, roast chicken, roasted, braised, and grilled dishes.
Production	10,000 cases made



**Cellaring
Scores/Awards**

Drink 2026-2056

97 points - James Molesworth, Wine Spectator - January 2021
95-98 points - James Molesworth, Wine Spectator - June 2019
97+ points - Lisa Perrotti-Brown, Wine Advocate - March 2021
97-99 points - Lisa Perrotti-Brown, Wine Advocate - April 2019
98 points - James Suckling, JamesSuckling.com - March 2021
98-99 points - James Suckling, JamesSuckling.com - April 2019
96 points/Cellar Selection - Roger Voss, Wine Enthusiast - April 1, 2021
95-97 points - Roger Voss, Wine Enthusiast - April 1, 2019
17 points - Jancis Robinson, JancisRobinson.com - May 2019
17.5 points - Julia Harding, JancisRobinson.com - October 2020
97 points - Jane Anson, Decanter.com - November 2020
98 points - Jane Anson, Decanter.com - April 2019
97 points - Jeff Leve, thewinecellarinsider.com - March 2021
97-99 points - Jeff Leve, thewinecellarinsider.com - April 2019
17.5 points - Farr Vintner - April 2019
95 points - Neal Martin, Vinous - March 2021
94-96 points - Neal Martin, Vinous - November 2019
94 points - Antonio Galloni, Vinous - March 2021
90-93 points - Antonio Galloni, Vinous - April 2019
99 points - Jeb Dunnuck MW - March 2021
97-100 points - Jeb Dunnuck MW - May 2019
18+ points - Matthew Jukes, MW - April 2019
96 points - Falstaff Magazine (score only) - February 2021
94 points - Jeannie Cho Lee MW, asianpalate.com (score only) - March 2019
95 points - Jean Marc Quarin (score only) - March 2019
18 points - La Revue du Vin France (score only) - January 2021
17.5 points - Vinum Wine Magazine (score only) - June 2019

Reviews

"Ripe and seductive, with a caressing wave of cassis, plum puree and blackberry compote flavors that hold sway throughout, but not without support from enticing savory, licorice, warm loam, and mineral accents along the way. Cashmere finish lets everything sail on and on. Gorgeous. Best from 2024 through 2040."
- JM, Wine Spectator

"Ripe and lush, with delicious waves of plum, blackberry and black currant preserve flavors laced with subtle charcoal, tobacco, and licorice notes. There's a long flow through the finish. Beautifully rendered, capturing the ripeness of the vintage in spades without being heady at all. 10,000 cases made."
- JM, Wine Spectator

"The very deep garnet-purple colored 2018 Smith Haut Lafitte bursts onto the scene with showy scents of crème de cassis, mocha, licorice, and cedar chest, followed by suggestions of baked plums, smoked meats, tar and tobacco leaf. The medium to full-bodied palate brings sophistication to all that flamboyant fruit with a beautifully styled frame of finely grained tannins and bold freshness, finishing bright and fruity with loads of minerally sparks. This is a stunning, singular style that is sure to turn heads!"
- LPB, Wine Advocate

"Composed of 60% Cabernet Sauvignon, 34% Merlot, 4% Cabernet Franc and 2% Petit Verdot aging in 60% new barriques, the very deep purple-black colored 2018 Smith Haut Lafitte is a little shy to begin. With coaxing, it very slowly unfurls to reveal a heart-stopping perfume of violets, red roses, kirsch, black cherries, and redcurrant jelly, before giving way to a profound core of warm blackcurrants, blackberry preserves, molten licorice, and cinnamon stick with nuances of dried mint, orange blossoms (yes!) and cloves. Full-bodied, the fruit does veritable pirouettes on your palate, both elegant and powerful in its expression, coating the mouth with densely packed red and black fruits while revealing tons of mineral, floral and savory sparks, framed by exquisitely fine-grained tannins and bold freshness, finishing very long."
- LPB, Wine Advocate

Reviews *“Purity of fruit here with plum and cherry aromas, as well as wet earth and spice. Light stone. Very floral and vivid. Full-bodied with layers of ripe tannins that are balanced and polished. Savory finish. Incredibly polished and refined. Goes on for minutes. One of the finest Smith-Haut Lafitte’s I have tasted. Drink after 2024.”*
- JS, JamesSuckling.com

“This is incredibly complex with hazelnut, currant, berry and dried-flower character. The impression of a vat of fermenting cabernet. Full body, round and juicy tannins and a long, soft, and silky finish. Shows the essence of the fruit here. Fascinating. Layered and complex”
- JS, JamesSuckling.com

*“This wine offers rich licorice and blackberry flavors as well as freshness. It has structure and power while also showing fruitiness and acidity that offer poise. The wine’s long-term future is assured. Drink from 2026. Organic and biodynamic. *Cellar Selection*.”*
- RV, Wine Enthusiast

“This is a finely structured, impressive wine that displays bold tannins and a streak of freshness. This shows great balance between its bold structure and rich fruit. Its tannins are the sign of its aging potential.”
- RV, Wine Enthusiast

“Exceptionally dark crimson. Fresh and ripe – almost rudely healthy on the nose! Perhaps not quite knit on the mid palate yet and with a little oak in evidence but lots of ingredients there. Dry finish.”
- JR, JancisRobinson.com

“Organic. 18 months in 60% new oak. Black-hearted with dark cherry rim. Surprisingly sweet and fragrant on the nose, with both black and dark-red fruit. Beautifully sculpted and textured tannins, still very compact but smooth and shapely, all filled out by the rich, dry, scented cassis fruit flavours. Elegant already but should have a long life ahead. Impressive persistence. A beauty in its balance.”
- JH, JancisRobinson.com

“Really settling into the potential that it showed en primeur, this is tightly coiled right now but still full of plush, carefully placed tannins, with olive paste, cassis, and dark chocolate. Powerful but also elegant and understated. Straight from the moment you pour this you see, visually and on the aromatics, the density of the wine. This has really held the promise and power that it delivered during en primeur. Subtle and concentrated with dark chocolate, truffle and cassis that gather weight as it expands outwards through the palate. Mineral pulses along the finish add finesse and balance, as does smoke and crushed stone as it opens further.”
-JA, Decanter.com

“There is a luxurious, languorous feel right from the very first nose here, which continues step for step all the way through the palate. It's a highly impressive wine with an amazing texture - something that is starting to mark Smith Haut Lafitte out every year. Notes of dark chocolate, black cherry and liquorice stretch out through the rich palate, displaying tension and texture. Harvested 18 September to 10 October. 60% new oak.”
-JA, Decanter.com

“Deep, dark almost inky in color, the wine pops with smoke, licorice, wet forest, spice box, cherry, black raspberry, espresso, and dark chocolate create an exciting aromatic profile. The wine is rich, deep, dense, concentrated, plush and sensual. There is a lot going on here, but everything is in harmony. Most of the oak is already integrated, due to a reduction of time in the barrel and less toast. This helps show off the purity in the fruits and softens the expression, making this a stellar wine, that will age gracefully for decades. Not much wine was produced as yields were less than half of a normal year. This could be my favorite vintage of Smith Haut Lafitte.”
- JL, thewinecellarinsider.com

“Opaque in color, just one look tells you this is going to exciting to taste. Licorice, smoke, barbecue, burning campfire embers and black fruits might be the first thing you notice but it is the palate, coated by the layers of sensuous, pure, ripe, velvet textured fruit that really rocks. The wine is creamy, juicy and even with all that fruit

Reviews

-- fresh! The finish must last at least 60 seconds as it moves back and forth from red fruit to black fruit several times. There is serious competition for the best vintage ever from Smith Haut Lafitte, as there have been so many great vintages here but clearly 2018 is in contention for the top title."

- JL, thewinecellarinsider.com

"Deep purple with an exotic and powerful nose of wood smoke, roasted meats, and black cherries. The palate is flashy and plush, with cashmere tannins and glossy black fruits. Through the mid palate the fruit becomes increasingly sweet and chocolately, with hints of baked vanilla and brioche. The tannins are poised and refined, supporting rather than dominating the fruit. The finish is toasty, plump, and long."

- Farr Vintners

"The 2018 Smith Haut Lafitte was very impressive in barrel, and now in bottle, it delivers. Wonderful precision on the nose, subtle at first but unfurling with each swirl of the glass, revealing scents of blackberry and crushed stone, iris petals like before, and maybe a touch more violet. The palate is medium-bodied with fine tension and good structure. This is a very tight Smith Haut Lafitte, and even affording it 3–4 hours of decanting, it eventually offers plenty of black fruit, black olives, a light marine influence, and a pinch of cracked black pepper on the sturdy finish. An outstanding Smith Haut Lafitte, given the vintage."

- NM, Vinous

"The 2018 Smith Haut Lafitte was picked from 18 September until 8 October. There was no saignée according to winemaker Fabien Teitgen and he told me that this year they used no stems. I have to say, I really adore this nose: blackberry, bilberry, crushed stone, and iris petals, very well defined and the new oak playing a supporting role. The palate is medium-bodied with grainy tannins, taut and linear with black fruit laced with iodine and black olive. There is plenty of freshness here, very focused with a crisp and lively finish. This is a superb Smith Haut Lafitte that should age with real style. 2023 – 2050."

- NM, Vinous

"The 2018 Smith Haut Lafitte is a powerful wine. Huge, searing tannins dominate the balance. Readers will have to be exceedingly patient. With several hours of air, the fruit finally starts to emerge. Blackberry, grilled herbs, smoke, licorice, and incense all take shape in the glass. The impression is of brooding, somber, unrestrained power. Sadly, mildew took with it 50% of the potential crop."

- AG, Vinous

"The 2018 Smith Haut Lafitte is powerful, dense, and also tightly wound. There is good depth to the red cherry and plum fruit, but the 2018 comes across as not fully put together. It will be interesting to see what élevage does, but today, the Grand Vin, while good, is not especially thrilling. The tannins need time to soften, and the wine just needs time to find its center. I found the 2018 very challenging to taste on two separate occasions."

- AG, Vinous

"Its dense purple color is followed by an incredible perfume of blackcurrants, blueberries, camphor, scorched earth, chocolate, and tobacco. It's young and unevolved, yet the purity is off the charts, and it slowly gives up more spice and floral notes with time in the glass. Hitting the palate with full-bodied richness, it's an incredibly concentrated, powerful wine that has plenty of baby fat covering serious amounts of underlying structure and tannins."

- Jeb Dunnuck

"The 2018 Château Smith Haut Lafitte reveals a saturated purple color as well as rock star notes of crème de cassis, blueberries, graphite, crushed rocks, and spice. Deep, profoundly concentrated, beautifully seamless and textured on the palate, it reminds me of the 2009 with its opulent, powerful style. It's a brilliant wine from this terrific estate and up with the top wines in the vintage. Hats off to director Fabien Teitgen who continues to make an elegant yet powerful, uncompromising style of wine."

- Jeb Dunnuck

"I love the strict, tightly-wound Cabernet here and the tannins are huge in this wine. It will be a sleeper and I think that it could make fifty years such is the grip. The winemaking was incredibly gentle and yet there is a mass of potential which will propel this blackcurrant time bomb to explode. A classic."

- MJ, matthewjukes.com
