

Château Lafon-Rochet 2018

CSPC# 844660

750mlx6

14.5% alc./vol.

Grape Variety	64% Cabernet Sauvignon, 26% Merlot, 6% Petit Verdot, 4% Cabernet Franc
Appellation	Saint Estèphe
Classification	Fourth Growth. Quatrieme Grand Cru Classe in 1855.
Website	http://www.lafon-rochet.com/en/
Sustainability	Organic

General Info

Château Lafon-Rochet is a property that is impossible to miss off the D2, a picturesque wine route that weaves its way through the Médoc. The structure is a brightly painted sunny yellow color, and unlike some of the more formidable estates with their drawbridges, moats and guard towers, the atmosphere here is distinctly modern and cheery. The story of Château Lafon-Rochet is a long and redemptive one with its share of hardships yet manages to have a happy ending. Once Château Lafon-Rochet was acquired by the Tesseron Family, the estate really managed to reinvent itself. What was once a property near the brink of destruction is now a shining success story. Château Lafon-Rochet produces powerful wines that are very much worthy of its Fourth Growth title.

The inception of Château Lafon-Rochet dates back to the mid 17th Century, when Antoinette Guillemotes purchased the Rochet Estate as a dowry for her husband, Etienne de Lafon. The story goes the estate was named Rochet after its rocky, Saint Estèphe terroir. Once the Lafon family owned the property, they changed the name to Lafon-Rochet, as was tradition of the time. The estate rose to prominence and was classified as a Fourth Growth in 1855. At the turn of the century, however, Château Lafon Rochet fell victim to the phylloxera plague that was destroying vineyards throughout Bordeaux.

The tides of fortunes turned for the worse, and in the 1960s when the Tesseron purchased it, it was in such disrepair the buildings were rendered unusable. Always up for a challenge, Guy Tesseron spared no expense at renovating the property and Château Lafon-Rochet is the only Classified Growth to have had a château built in the 20th Century. He chose to paint the property a sunny yellow color because he wanted to celebrate the modernity of Château Lafon-Rochet. The estate is a family-run operation, and it's clear they prioritize the vines above everything else.

Winemaker Jean-Claude Berrouet consultant

Vintage

The 2018 vintage is the result of a long, wet period, followed by very dry, warm weather that lasted until the harvest. These climatic events and the often-low yields helped build powerful but also very fresh wines.

2018 Saint Estèphe wines can be alcoholic with some hitting 14.5% alcohol, but there was no sensation of heat or jammy qualities. Instead, you have beautiful, supple characteristics with freshness and concentration that comes from low yields in the vineyard.

Vineyards

The 45-hectare vineyard of Lafon Rochet is in almost one single, large parcel, which is unusual for the region. They have 40 hectares under vine. Their terroir is mostly gravel, clay, sand, limestone, and marl soils. Part of what makes their terroir unique is that some of the clay in their vineyards is the same type of hard, blue clay found in Pomerol at Petrus. Château Lafon Rochet has good neighbors. They are ideally placed not far from Château Cos d'Estournel and Château Lafite Rothschild in Pauillac. The Saint Estèphe vineyard of Lafon Rochet is planted to 57% Cabernet Sauvignon, 37% Merlot, 4% Petit Verdot and 2% Cabernet Franc. Lafon Rochet continues to experiment with organic and biodynamic farming techniques. At least 10% of their vineyards were farmed using these techniques with more of their vineyards to follow if they like the results. Things turned around quickly here. In 2016, for the first time, they farmed almost 100% of their vines using organic



Vineyards	farming methods. At Chateau Lafon Rochet, they take advantage of optical sorting techniques. The terroir is highly unique at Château Lafon-Rochet, as they have the same type of blue clay as the incomparable producer, Château Pétrus. Perhaps this is why they have brought on the former winemaker at Pétrus, Jean-Claude Berrouet, as their consultant?
Harvest	Cabernet Sauvignon: Sept 28-Oct 13 Merlot: Sept 24-Oct 8 Cabernet Franc: Oct 1 Petit Verdot: Oct 11 and 13
Vinification/ Maturation	Manually harvested, crushed into vat for cold pre-fermentation maceration for 24-72 hrs. Alcoholic fermentation for 10 days, wine is separated from Grape seeds and skin and run into barrels for maloOalactic fermentation which lasts from November to February with final blend made in March, then aged in oak till bottling. Aged 12 months in 50% new barrels.
Tasting Notes	An expressive nose, on freshness, with crunchy ripped fruits, red berries (blackcurrant, strawberry, raspberry). A clear attack, fresh with spreading tannins and a fine structure. Smooth and complex finales with a lovely fruity aromatic aftertaste, cinnamon.
Serve with	Chateau Lafon Rochet is best served at 15.5 degrees Celsius, 60 degrees Fahrenheit. The cool, almost cellar temperature gives the wine more freshness and lift. Young vintages can be decanted for 1-2 hours. This allows the wine to soften and open its perfume. Older vintages might need very little decanting, just enough to remove the sediment. Lafon Rochet is best served with all types of classic meat dishes, veal, pork, beef, lamb, duck, game, roast chicken, roasted, braised, and grilled dishes.
Cellaring Scores/Awards	Drink now-2032 92 points - James Molesworth, Wine Spectator - March 2021 92-93 points - James Molesworth, Wine Spectator - June 2019 91 points - Lisa Perrotti-Brown, Wine Advocate - March 2021 90-92+ points - Lisa Perrotti-Brown, Wine Advocate - April 2019 94 points - James Suckling, JamesSuckling.com - March 2021 93-94 points - James Suckling, JamesSuckling.com - April 2019 95 points - Roger Voss, Wine Enthusiast - May 2021 17.5 points - Jancis Robinson, JancisRobinson.com - February 2022 17 points - Julia Harding, JancisRobinson.com - March 2019 94 points - Jane Anson, Decanter.com - March 2019 94 points - Jeff Leve, thewinecellarinsider.com - March 2021 93-95 points - Jeff Leve, thewinecellarinsider.com - September 2019 91+ points - Farr Vintner - April 2019 93 points - Neal Martin, Vinous - March 2019 92-94 points - Neal Martin, Vinous - November 2019 94 points - Antonio Galloni, Vinous - March 2021 92-95 points - Antonio Galloni, Vinous - May 2019 94 points - Jeb Dunnuck MW - March 2021 17.5+ points - Matthew Jukes, MW - April 2019 94 points - Jean Marc Quarin (score only) - March 2019 93 points - Wilfred Wong, Wine.com - June 2021 92 points - Falstaff Magazine - February 2021 94-95 points - Vert de Vin - April 2019 17 points - Vinum Wine Magazine (score only) - September 2021
Reviews	<i>"Seductive, with a gush of dark plum and blackberry preserve notes leading off, while light bay, dark tobacco, and charcoal notes peek through. Has a racy edge through the finish, even with the warm fruit keeping the upper hand. Nicely done. Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Petit Verdot and Cabernet Franc. Drink now through 2032."</i> - JM, Wine Spectator <i>"Light pepper and bay leaf accents lead the way, followed by ripe plum and blackberry compote flavors. Juicy and open in feel up front but acquires a nice tug of earth through the finish. Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Petit Verdot and Cabernet Franc. Score Range: 90-93"</i> - JM, Wine Spectator

Reviews

“Deep garnet-purple colored, the 2018 Lafon-Rochet delivers impactful scents of baked blackberries, warm cassis, and black cherry compote, with suggestions of chargrill, tar and tobacco leaf, plus a waft of wild mushrooms. The medium to full-bodied palate is laden with black fruit preserves and earthy accents, supported by firm, chewy tannins and just enough freshness, finishing with great length, if a little chewy. Drink 2024-2041.”
- LPB, Wine Advocate

“Deep garnet-purple colored, the 2018 Lafon-Rochet is scented of cassis, blackberries, herbs and soil with tar and underbrush. Medium to full-bodied, the palate is firm and grainy with herb sparks and an earthy finish.”
- LPB, Wine Advocate

“Blackberry and blueberry on the nose, as well as dark-chocolate, mineral, and earthy undertones. It’s full-bodied with firm tannins. Fleshy and savory texture with layers. Flavorful finish and beautiful length. Lovely ripe fruit in the center palate. Try after 2025.”
- JS, JamesSuckling.com

“A firm and silky red with blackberries and hints of chocolate and hazelnut character. Medium to full body. Beautiful, fresh finish.”
- JS, JamesSuckling.com

“This wine comes from an estate that is performing with distinction. It is rich, the tannins cushioned by ripe blackberry fruits and good acidity. Showing both structure and fruitiness, the wine will develop well, everything in balance. Drink from 2026.”
- RV, Wine Enthusiast

“Tasted blind. Interesting zestiness on the nose. Clean as a whistle on entering the palate and rather restrained but with real class. Great balance and intensity. Long. 14.5%. Drink 2027 – 2047.”
- JR, JancisRobinson.com

“Barrel sample. Deepest crimson core with wide purple rim. Unusual nose: wild black fruits, vibrant fruit. Intense too, a bit like a blackcurrant pastille. Really expressive on the nose. Chocolate flavour and texture on the palate, not as vibrant as I expected from the nose, perhaps just all curled up inside the oak. The freshness on the finish is lovely. And the finish very long. Very good. 17/20 points.”
- JH, JancisRobinson.com

“I presume Basile Tesseron is feeling pretty relieved that he decided not to continue with organics in February 2018, as the ability to be more flexible with treatments proved pretty important during the rest of the season. The result is very good, full of juice and life, with crunchy blackberry and cassis fruits that are up there in expression with the 2016. It has clear quality, but is also pretty austere, with good slate minerality and touches of hedgerow. It feels like a wine with good life ahead and something to say. 4% Cabernet Franc makes up the blend.”
- JA, Decanter.com

“Espresso, flowers, cocoa, tobacco leaf, wet earth and red pit fruit aromas are all over the place. The wine is rich, round, juicy and loaded with sweet, lifted red fruits. The tannins are soft, the freshness provides the right amount of lift, and you find intriguing notes of spice and spearmint in the finish. Give it a just a few years to soften and develop additional nuances and enjoy it over the following 2 decades or more. The wine was made from blending 64% Cabernet Sauvignon, 26% Merlot, 6% Petit Verdot and 4% Cabernet Franc.”
- JL, thewinecellarinsider.com

“Quite floral in nature, from there you find black and dark red fruits, spice box, tobacco leaf and cocoa. Full-bodied, deep, rich, and ripe, the palate enjoys layers of opulent, fleshy, dark red fruits, bitter chocolate, and licorice. The wine was made from blending 64% Cabernet Sauvignon, 26% Merlot, 6% Petit Verdot and 4% Cabernet Franc, reaching 14.75% alcohol with a pH of 3.75. 5% of the wine is aging in foudres. This is the finest vintage of Lafon Rochet I have ever tasted. Basile Tesseron is doing a great job managing the estate today.”
- JL, thewinecellarinsider.com

Reviews

“Deep ruby in colour with an inky, ripe nose of cassis and light toast. The palate is chalky and rich in tannin, with crunchy red and black fruits. This is fine and firm, a classic St Estèphe in style. There are licks of spice and savoury cedar on the finish, complementing the pure cherries. Compact and dense, this will need 5-10 years in bottle to integrate and soften.”

- Farr Vintners

“The 2018 Lafon-Rochet has an intense bouquet of black and red fruit, touches of wild mint and incense. It is still a pretty and engaging nose, just as I found from barrel. The palate is medium-bodied with grainy tannins, fine backbone and – what I really appreciate – superb precision and detail toward the saline finish. This is a classy, quite sophisticated Lafon-Rochet that deserves four or five years of cellaring. One of the best in recent years”

- NM, Vinous

“The 2018 Lafon-Rochet was picked from 24 September to 13 October, matured in concrete and stainless-steel vats and reaching 14.50% alcohol. It has a complex bouquet, a mélange of red and black fruit mixed with a little aniseed. It is pretty and winsome. The palate is medium-bodied with slightly chalky tannin, a fine bead of acidity and perhaps what distinguishes this vintage for myself is the precision on the silky-smooth finish. Even compared to the previous vintage, this shows a little more tension and pixelation, a fine sapidity that comes through on the aftertaste. Good potential. Drink 2021-2040.”

- NM, Vinous

“The 2018 Lafon-Rochet is such a classy wine. Power and finesse meld together in this Saint-Estèphe that is gorgeous, right from the very first taste. Black cherry, herbs, leather, licorice, and dried flowers all build in the glass. In 2018, Lafon-Rochet is richer and bolder than it usually is, and yet all the elements are so nicely balanced. I would give it a few years in the cellar to allow some of the baby fat to melt away.”

- AG, Vinous

“A wine of lovely finesse the 2018 Lafon-Rochet offers a striking combination of fruit density and nuance, all in an understated style that is quite appealing. Dark cherry, sweet tobacco, menthol, dried flowers, and mint all run through this silky, supple Saint-Estèphe. As always, Lafon-Rochet is one of the more laid back, elegant wines of the appellation. Even so, the 2018 has lovely mid-palate sweetness and silky tannins, both of which add to its considerable appeal. The blend is 64% Cabernet Sauvignon, 26% Merlot, 6% Petit Verdot and 4% Cabernet Franc. Yields were a healthy 50 hectoliters per hectare, higher than the average, which is closer to 42-45. Tasted three times.”

- AG, Vinous

“The upper Médoc did brilliantly in 2018, and that's certainly apparent when tasting the 2018 Château Lafon-Rochet. Sporting a deep purple hue as well as a gorgeous bouquet of ripe black and blue fruits, lead pencil, forest floor, chocolate, and leafy herbs, this beauty hits the palate with full-bodied richness, a round, mouth-filling texture, ripe, velvety tannins, and a great finish. It doesn't quite have the precision of the top wines in the appellation, but it's loaded with charm and character, and I'd certainly be thrilled to drink a bottle. This rich, textured, flavorful Saint-Estèphe will benefit from 4-6 years in the cellar and keep for two decades.”

- Jeb Dunnuck

“(64 Cabernet Sauvignon, 26 Merlot, 6 Petit Verdot, 4 Cabernet Franc) | 42% new oak | 14.5% alc This is a super-succulent Lafon-Rochet with fleshy Cabernet fruit which is nicely weighted with just the right amount of oak and spice. The nose is beautiful and there are mulberry notes overlaying the cassis core. A lip-smacking wine, which adds crisp tannins and bright acidity to its ingredients, this is undoubtedly another Saint-Estèphe winner in 2018.”

- MJ, matthewjukes.com

“Dark ruby garnet, violet reflections, delicate rim lightening. Delicately underlaid with fresh dark berries and tobacco, a hint of ripe plums, subtle herbal spices, delicate cassis. Medium-bodied, red heart cherries, fine tannins, good freshness, mineral finish, shows balance and good length, a multi-faceted accompaniment to food. (2020-2040)”

- Falstaff Magazine

Reviews *“The nose is fruity, fresh, elegant, justly built and offers concentration, intensity. It reveals notes of bright cassis, Boysenberry and small notes of small wild red berries associated with touches of violet, lily as well as hints of racy minerality, rose, zan, pepper. The palate is fruity, well-balanced and offers a beautiful juiciness, gourmandize, a beautiful finesse of the grain, complexity, deepness, a fine fleshiness, suavity as well as a small concentration and power. On the palate this wine expresses notes of bright wild blackberry, cassis and small notes of violet associated with touches of bright raspberry, tonka bean, toasted, vanilla, a subtle hint of nutmeg as well as a very discreet hint of sugared tobacco and grilled (in the background). Good length. A very fine hint of chocolate in the finish.”*
- Vert de Vin

“The 2018 Château Lafon-Rochet is firm, poised, and well-balanced. TASTING NOTES: This wine shows excellent aromas and flavors of red and black fruit, with a dollop of oak. Enjoy it with a grilled, well-marbled, juicy ribeye.”
- WW, Wine.com
