

Château Smith Haut Lafitte Rouge 2017

CSPC# 814285

750mlx12

13.5% alc./vol.

Grape Variety	60% Cabernet Sauvignon, 35% Merlot, 4% Cabernet Franc, 1% Petit Verdot.
Appellation	Pessac-Léognan
Classification	Grand Cru Classé
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>
Winemaker	Fabien Teitgen
Vintage	<p>A few low-lying vines and a small section near the trees were lost to frost this year at Château Smith Haut Lafitte, but this vineyard got off lightly compared to other estates in Pessac-Léognan. The frosted areas were those that would have gone into the second labels: Les Hauts de Smith and Le Petit Haut Lafitte. However, the Cathiards' other estate in this commune, Château Cantelys, lost 60% of the crop to the frosts. "The seeds were not totally ripe this year, so extraction was more about maceration with very gentle extraction, so as not to pull out the bitter seed tannins," commented winemaker Fabien Teitgen. He managed to use a small proportion of whole bunch—about 25%—for the Merlot component this year, while the other 75% was produced with whole berries</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 from September 11 through September 29 and the Grand Vin represents just 40% of the harvest. Due to the frost, the yields here are very low – sadly, only 30 to 35 hectoliters per hectare.
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	The triumphant Smith Haut Lafitte 2017 is one of the most beautiful references of Graves in this vintage. Dominated by Cabernet Sauvignon (60%), the blend is rounded out by Merlot (35%), Cabernet Franc (4%) and Petit Verdot (1%). This Cru displays superb aromatic concentration with notes of black berries. Large and full-bodied, the wine is elegantly structured with velvety tannins, coating the palate in a succession of flavors, stretching forth into a deliciously persistent finish. A superb vintage that will endure the years to come
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 2022-2038

95 points - James Molesworth, Wine Spectator - March 31, 2020
91-94 points - James Molesworth, Wine Spectator - April 2018
97+ points - Lisa Perrotti-Brown, Wine Advocate - March 2020
94-96 points - Lisa Perrotti-Brown, Wine Advocate #236 - April 2018
97 points - James Suckling, JamesSuckling.com - February 2020
95-96 points - James Suckling, JamesSuckling.com - April 2018
95 points - Roger Voss, Wine Enthusiast - March 1, 2020
95-97 points - Roger Voss, Wine Enthusiast - April 1, 2018
17.5 points - Julia Harding, JancisRobinson.com - October 2019
16 points - Jancis Robinson, JancisRobinson.com - May 2018
17 points - Julia Harding, JancisRobinson.com - April 2018
94 points - Jane Anson, Decanter.com - April 2018
96 points - Jeff Leve, thewinecellarinsider.com - April 2018
91-93 points - Tim Atkin, MW - timatkin.com - April 2018
16+ points - Farr Vintner - April 2018
93-95 points - Derek Smedley, MW - April 2018
94 points - Neal Martin, Vinous - February 2020
93-95 points - Neal Martin, Vinous - May 2018
97 points - Antonio Galloni, Vinous - March 2020
94-97 points - Antonio Galloni, Vinous - April 2018
96 points - Jeb Dunnuck MW - February 2020
18+ points - Matthew Jukes, MW - April 2018
93 points - Falstaff Magazine (score only)

Reviews

"Intense blackberry and raspberry paste flavors run through the middle, flanked by steeped anise, black licorice and roasted apple wood notes. The finish is grounded by a strong graphite spine, while the fruit pumps through. A lingering echo of violet adds a graceful accent. Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Cabernet Franc and Petit Verdot. Best from 2022 through 2038. 10,000 cases made."

- JM, Wine Spectator

"This has a good core of dark plum and blackberry fruit, with a twinge of licorice snap mixed in. A hint of bramble on the finish, with the vintage's refined, fresh acidity as well. 10,000 cases made"

- JM, Wine Spectator

"Medium to deep garnet-purple colored, the 2017 Smith Haut Lafitte charges out of the gate with bold expressions of warm redcurrants, baked blackberries and crème de cassis with hints of spice cake, dried roses, underbrush and pencil lead plus a waft of candied violets. Medium to full-bodied, the palate has a fantastic core of densely packed red and black fruits, framed by wonderfully ripe, rounded tannins and seamless freshness, finishing long and perfumed. 2024 – 2057"

- LPB, Wine Advocate

"A blend of 60% Cabernet Sauvignon, 35% Merlot, 4% Cabernet Franc and 1% Petit Verdot, the deep garnet-purple colored 2017 Smith Haut Lafitte opens slowly to reveal complex notes of crushed black cherries, black currants and wild blueberries with touches of lavender, pencil lead, cast iron pan and a waft of aniseed. Medium-bodied and elegant with great freshness and quiet intensity, it has firm, grainy tannins and a sustained yet ethereal mid-palate, with a long, energetic, mineral-laced finish."

- LPB, Wine Advocate

"Wonderful depth of fruit here with blackberries, wet earth, mushrooms, dark chocolate and violets. Full-bodied, tight and poised with polished and compressed tannins. Consistent finish. Linear and focused. "

- JS, JamesSuckling.com

"This is a solid Smith for the vintage with blackberry and blackcurrant character. Full to medium body, firm and silky tannins and a lingering finish. Excellent potential here."

- JS, JamesSuckling.com

Reviews *"In this well-structured, rich wine, Cabernet Sauvignon's ripe black-currant flavors merge with jammier Merlot. It is elegant and powerful, dense and poised. This style of wine will age impressively, likely to be ready from 2023 or, better, 2024."*

- RV, Wine Enthusiast

"95–97. Barrel Sample. Bold tannins and powerful fruits give this perfumed wine concentration and a dense texture. It is rich in pure black fruit-flavors, with bright acidity that will allow for aging. The power and the structure of this wine are impressive, while not losing the crisp fruitiness of the vintage. Drink from 2024."

- RV, Wine Enthusiast

"60% Cabernet Sauvignon, 35% Merlot, 4% Cabernet Franc, 1% Petit Verdot.

Dark crimson. Ripe and sweetly but not overly oaky on the nose. Beautifully aromatic already. The oak is certainly there on the palate but not surprising at this young age. And the fruit is firm, fresh and scented. Lite tannins in a harmonious whole. Long and lovely even in youth. Deep, chewy and balanced but needs patience. Great fruit depth. (JH)

- JH, JancisRobinson.com

"Very intense blueish crimson. Mild and fairly neutral on the nose. Extraordinarily soft! Perhaps this is the answer for 2017? Make a Nouveau! Easy-peasy, but don't pay top whack for it. Very light tannins."

- JR, JancisRobinson.com

"Smells sweet-fruited and sweetly oaky. Lovely fruit flavour on the palate – dark-red fruit – could perhaps do with just a little more fruit stuffing in the middle but this may just need a bit longer in barrel. Finishes fresh and the tannins are dry and refined. A sleeping beauty perhaps? (JH)"

- JH, JancisRobinson.com

"This sits a long way above the second wines this year, and here they are very close to recent successes, with excellent juice running right through the cassis, bilberry, liquorice, dark chocolate and charcoal notes. It's an extremely classical, sculpted vintage with a lovely grilled edge that gives a gourmet, confident feel. It has a velvety texture and finely placed, flexible tannins that are clearly going to age well. This is a real success, and a testament to their attention to detail - for example, they had 105 pickers in 2016 but 160 pickers in 2017, because with the September rain they wanted to go more quickly. Half of the vineyard is now farmed biodynamically, with full conversion expected for 2020. (JA)"

- JA, Decanter.com

"On the far edge of opaque with dark purple accents glimmering in a submerged cavern of blood red, espresso, smoke, black fruits, wet earth, licorice, truffle and dark chocolate introduce themselves instantly. Full-bodied, plump and glamorous with serious density, length and character, the tannins are ripe, but this wine is going to need time in the cellar even with all its ripe, supple fruits. The wine was made from a blend of 60% Cabernet Sauvignon, 35% Merlot, 4% Cabernet Franc and 1% Petit Verdot, reaching 13.5% alcohol with a pH of 3.7. The harvest took place September 11 through September 29 and the Grand Vin represents just 40% of the harvest. Due to the frost, the yields here are very low – sadly, only 30 to 35 hectoliters per hectare."

- JL, thewinecellarinsider.com

"Very deep colour. Oaky and spicy aromas. Very rich and concentrated with sweet fruit and spices. No leanness and great tannic structure and length. Barrel Sample: 91-93"

- TA, timatkin.com

"The vineyards that supply fruit for the grand vin suffered almost no frost damage, so production is only 5% down on 2016. The 2017 blend is 60% Cabernet Sauvignon, 35% Merlot, 4% Cabernet Franc and 1% Petit Verdot. At 13.5 degrees this has 1 degree less alcohol than the previous 2 vintages and they describe it as a vintage of "freshness and balance between the quality of 2014 and 2015". Deep ruby colour. An impressive intensity on the nose, with layered and fleshy blue and black fruits supported by creamy, sweet vanilla. The palate has a silky texture from very fine-grained and ripe tannins. The juicy forest fruits are propped up by a

Reviews *dollop of creamy vanilla from sweet and toasty new oak. Despite this, the overall sensation is one of precision and poise. The long and vibrant finish of black fruits is synonymous with modern Smith Haut Lafitte, which is a success again in 2017.*"

- Farr Vintners

"The nose is light fragrant with citrus freshness the start of the palate bright with a mix of fresh fruits. Pear and pineapple in the middle gives a richer feel depth of fruit at the back with citrus and apple giving a lovely crisp finish. Drink 2021-2036."

- Derek Smedley MW

"The 2017 Smith Haut Lafitte has an open and expressive bouquet, a mixture of red and black fruit, pressed iris petals mixed with subtle marine notes, iodine and seaweed. It is not as powerful as the 2018 but it is nicely focused. The palate is fresh on the entry with crisp tannins and vibrant black fruit. There is superb energy towards the graphite and mint infused finish. There is a lot of energy in this 2017 that actually renders it quite approachable, though I would prefer to leave bottles down in the cellar for several years. (NM)"

- NM, Vinous

"The 2017 Smith Haut Lafitte was not affected by frost and is therefore a classic blend matured in 60% new oak. The bouquet demands a little encouragement from the glass this year, eventually opening with floral scents, more iris than violet, flanked by blackberry and bilberry. The palate is medium bodied with fine tannin that comes across just a little chalky in style. This feels very cohesive and comes replete with a detailed and nuanced finish that might lack the flair and volume of the 2016, but it is certainly sustained and persistent. Give this four to five years in bottle and subject to optimal barrel maturation this may well land at the top of my banded score. Drink 2022-2045."

- NM, Vinous

"The 2017 Smith Haut Lafitte is fantastic. Rich, sumptuous and opulent, the 2017 dazzles with total class. Inky blue and purplish fruit, chocolate, licorice, menthol, sage and lavender infuse the 2017 with striking layers of depth and complexity. A wine of tremendous character and balance, the 2017 is flat-out gorgeous and very clearly one of the wines of the year."

- AG, Vinous

The 2017 Smith Haut Lafitte is easily one of the highlights of the vintage. Dense, unctuous and impeccably balanced, the 2017 exudes depth from start to finish. Charcoal embers, graphite, menthol, licorice and sage add myriad shades of nuance to the plush, unctuous dark raspberry jam fruit. This is a super impressive showing from Smith Haut Lafitte. I tasted the 2017 two times. On both occasions, the wine showed tremendous aromatic and flavor depth."

- AG, Vinous

"Moving to the grand vin and a blend of 60% Cabernet Sauvignon, 35% Merlot, 4% Cabernet Franc, and 1% Petit Verdot aged 16 months in 60% new French oak, the 2017 Chateau Smith Haut Lafitte is a beauty, with rocking levels of cassis and red currant fruits interwoven with hints of dried herbs, salty minerality, subtle oak, and crushed violets. Concentrated and full-bodied on the palate, it has ripe tannins, a great mid-palate, and tons of charm and character. This is one of those wines that will be beautiful in just 3-4 years and yet age effortlessly for three decades. Hats off to winemaker Fabien Teitgen for a brilliant effort in the vintage"

- Jeb Dunnuck

"Made from the 'classic blend' because there was no frost here to force their hand, the balance from the start is exciting with dramatic tones of slightly exotic fruit tempered with steely acidity. The tension and the quality of the fruit is stunning. The mid-palate is not rich or fat and yet the depth of flavour is lovely. They didn't over-extract here and this was key to the soft core of fruit which lends this wine some serious class."

- MJ, matthewjukes.com
