

Château Smith Haut Lafitte 2021

CSPC# 852073

750mlx6

13.5% alc./vol.

Grape Variety 63% Cabernet Sauvignon, 33% Merlot, 3% 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>

Sustainability Certified organic with the 2019 vintage, the Cathiard family banished herbicides at this address in 1991, radically reducing chemical treatments and suffering the consequences for several years in the form of much diminished yields (today, happily, material and techniques are more sophisticated). In addition to organic methods, cover crops have been deployed on the vineyard's central blocks and western band, where soils are less well drained. Hedges have been planted to encourage biodiversity, and ultraviolet treatments are being trialed as an alternative to copper sulfate. In addition to such initiatives, the technical team is adapting to a warmer climate: that means picking a touch earlier, certainly, but more importantly, adapting in the vineyards, with somewhat lower canopies and an end to systematic deleafing to retain fresh, vibrant flavors.

General Info 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.

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.

Winemaker Fabien Teitgen. Michel Rolland and Stéphane Derenoncourt consult.

Vintage 2021 is atypical, following the pattern of "1" vintages.

The climatic conditions were totally extraordinary, with a very challenging and highly stressful growing season leading up to the late harvest.

Coming out of winter, conditions were calm and mild with budburst occurring between 24th March and 1st April across our plots. We had to endure 9 nights of frost between 28th March and 19th April, and this impacted our yields – in addition to the unusually long flowering period which lasted all through June due to an unusually wet spring.

Very warm temperatures combined with relatively high rainfall created almost 'tropical' conditions, leading to wild vegetative growth. This required us to employ significant manpower and intervene quickly to keep our trellis in optimal condition. By doing so, we were able to control the ripening of our grapes by pushing back the harvest, overcoming some rainy spells between the 18th and 29th September in the process. There was constant pressure and suspense right up until the last moment, meaning that I certainly won't forget the birth of this unique vintage.

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 Harvest September 22 to October 14. 23hl/h yield.

**Vinification/
Maturation** Whole grapes are fermented at 28°C in small wooden vats with extraction by manual punching down. Aged 18 months in barrels (60% are new barrels produced in our in-house cooperage), with aging on lees. After being racked a single time, wine is aged according to its profile.



Tasting Notes	A very open nose of fresh red fruits, raspberry, strawberry, and black fruits, blackberries, blackcurrant). Hints of sweet spices, liquorice, tobacco leaf. Complex and fresh. On the palate, it is well balanced with a good freshness and great deal of vivacity. Good concentration with a nice et soft texture, the wine offers a perfect harmony. Very lively, it is full of energy and delivers a great length. Nice complexity of flavors ranging from fresh fruits to spices, cigar box and hint of smoky minerality, faithful to the terroir of Graves. A great and complex wine between harmony and smoothness
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	Drink 2024-2036
Scores/Awards	<p>93 points - James Molesworth, Wine Spectator - January 2024</p> <p>95 points - Yohan Castaing, Wine Advocate - February 2024</p> <p>93-95 points - William Kelley, Wine Advocate - April 2022</p> <p>92-94 points - Lisa Perrotti-Brown, The Wine Independent - May 2022</p> <p>96-97 points - James Suckling, JamesSuckling.com - May 2022</p> <p>98-100 points - Roger Voss, Wine Enthusiast - June 2022</p> <p>16.5+ points - Jancis Robinson, JancisRobinson.com - May 2022</p> <p>94 points - Georgina Hindle, Decanter.com - March 2022</p> <p>95 points - Jane Anson, janeanson.com - May 2022</p> <p>95 points - Jeff Leve, thewinecellarinsider.com - March 2024</p> <p>94-96 points - Jeff Leve, thewinecellarinsider.com - May 2022</p> <p>94 points - Tim Atkin, MW - timatkin.com (score only) - April 2022</p> <p>91-94 points - Thomas Parker, Farr Vintners - April 2022</p> <p>92-94 points - Neal Martin, Vinous - May 2022</p> <p>96 points - Antonio Galloni, Vinous - February 2024</p> <p>95-97 points - Antonio Galloni, Vinous - May 2022</p> <p>93-95 points - Jeb Dunnuck MW - June 2022</p> <p>18+ points - Matthew Jukes - August 2022</p> <p>95 points - Jean Marc Quarin (score only) - April 2022</p> <p>94 points - Peter Moser, Falstaff Magazine - May 2022</p> <p>94-95 points - Vert de Vin - July 2022</p> <p>95-96 points - Bettane & Desseauve (score only) - May 2022</p>
Reviews	<p><i>"Provides a step up in substance, with steeped red and black currant fruit laced with tobacco, bay leaf and worn leather accents. Features flashes of warm earth and iron that underscore the finish, also showing depth and grip. Best from 2025 through 2035. 10,000 cases made."</i></p> <p>- JM, Wine Spectator</p> <p><i>"The 2021 Smith Haut Lafitte, a blend of 63% Cabernet Sauvignon, 33% Merlot, 3% Cabernet Franc and 1% Petit Verdot reveals a deep, complex bouquet of dark berries, spices, licorice, pencil lead and flowers intertwined with hints of menthol. Medium to full-bodied, satiny, and seamless, it's suave and concentrated, with velvety, elegant tannins and a refined, penetrating finish.</i></p> <p><i>Certified organic with the 2019 vintage, the Cathiard family banished herbicides at this address in 1991, radically reducing chemical treatments and suffering the consequences for several years in the form of much diminished yields (today, happily, materiel and techniques are more sophisticated). In addition to organic methods, cover crops have been deployed on the vineyard's central blocks and western band, where soils are less well drained. Hedges have been planted to encourage biodiversity, and ultraviolet treatments are being trialed as an alternative to copper sulfate. In addition to such initiatives, the technical team is adapting to a warmer climate: that means picking a touch earlier, certainly, but more importantly, adapting in the vineyards, with somewhat lower canopies and an end to systematic deleafing to retain fresh, vibrant flavors. Winemaking, too, is a little gentler: reds see cool but protracted macerations, with periodic punch-downs, and whites are whole-cluster pressed with an inerted press. This has brought new structural elegance and energy to the estate's wines. It surely helps that as much as possible is done in-house: since 1995, the Cathiards have their own nursery for their own massal selections, in partnership with Bérillon, and barrels are made in the château's own on-site cooperage too, favoring the forests of Tronçais and Jupilles for reds and Loches (which brings tension) for whites. All this is symptomatic of the attention to detail and seriousness that the Cathiards, and</i></p>

their technical director Fabien Teitgen, have brought to this estate—and it has paid off in the challenging 2021 vintage with a superb set of wines at every level.”

- WK, Wine Advocate

“A brilliant wine, the 2021 Smith Haut Lafitte offers up aromas of blackberries, violets, coniferous forest floor and dark chocolate. Medium to full-bodied, velvety, and seamless, it's deep and impressively multidimensional, with good concentration, beautifully refined tannins and notable purity of fruit, concluding with a long, penetrating finish. The fruit of a severe selection, this blend of 63% Cabernet Sauvignon, 33% Merlot, 3% Cabernet Franc and 1% Petit Verdot is testament to the Cathiard family's unwavering commitment to quality.”

- WK, Wine Advocate

“The 2021 Smith Haut Lafitte is a blend of 63% Cabernet Sauvignon, 33% Merlot, 3% Cabernet Franc, and 1% Petit Verdot, aging in 60% new oak. Deep garnet-purple in color, it needs a little swirling before it bursts with vibrant black cherries, fresh blackberries, and blackcurrant cordial scents, followed by hints of violets, star anise, and cedar chest. Medium-bodied, the palate delivers a great density of fresh black fruits and earthy layers, framed by firm, ripe, grainy tannins and compelling freshness, leading to a long finish with a spicy kick on this very impressive wine. At 22 hl/ha, yields are less than half of 2019 and about half of 2020, with 1/3 of the crop going into the Grand Vin this year. 2027-2047.”

- LPB, Wine Independent

“Lots of clove, black-licorice, and cigar-box character. Already perfumed. Medium body with fine, chalky, and precise tannins. Lead-pencil shavings. Well framed and structured with a fresh, lengthy, and spicy finish. Extremely long and intense. From organically grown grapes.”

- JS, JamesSuckling.com

“98–100. Barrel Sample. Fresh, crisp but with intensity and ripe texture, this wine is the star of the white wines this vintage. It is tight, with minerality and acidity. Pink grapefruit, and a dynamic texture reveal its concentration. It will be a great wine from a great white wine vintage.”

- RV, Wine Enthusiast

“63% Cabernet Sauvignon, 33% Merlot, 3% Cabernet Franc, 1% Petit Verdot. Cask sample. Dark crimson. Some ripe red fruit on the nose. Polished tannins and there is energy here. This sample seems to have a more convincing core than yesterday's sample tasted at the château. Good level of interest and detail here. Even if the level of acidity is higher than usual and the tannins obviously took some taming. Sweeter than some. Drink 2028 – 2042.”

- JR, JancisRobinson.com

“Gorgeous aromas on the nose, so expressive with blackcurrant, plum, damson, strawberry and red cherry all abounding out of the glass. This has style and substance on the palate, the sour cherry, blackcurrant, and blueberry covered in the terroir markers of slate, graphite, pencil lead and liquorice which are the drivers on the palate, the fruit taking a backseat right now though there is cohesion with verticality and an undercurrent of freshness. The energy is there, almost latent, it's under the surface, brimming, not yet ready to go but it will be there in time. This has refinement and you feel they haven't pushed too hard. It's definitely got the markers of the vintage, the coolness of the year, showing the grapes and terroir even more clearly in the glass, especially the spiced Cabernet aspects. I love the style and the no frills effect. It's got a super long length too with enough class on show you know it will age well.”

- GH, Decanter.com

“This is a cool climate savoury vintage where the best wines offer clarity of flavour and precision, and you are given a masterclass here in how to do that effectively. Well balanced and succulent architecture, plentiful blackberry, cassis, and black cherry fruits, cracked pepper, sage, liquorice, crushed rock, campfire smoke, elongated tannins. This will fatten up over ageing, because has all the elements in place to ensure it does so gracefully, the triumvirate of tannins, acidity, and fruit. Harvest September 22 to October 14. 60% new oak. 23hl/h yield.”

- JA, janeanson.com

Reviews

“Black cherries, orange rind, plums, flowers, blackberries, tobacco, and smoke-filled aromas get your focus with little effort. There is a richness to the wine due to all of its chocolate, licorice, cherries, and currants. The finish combines salty oceanic influences, dark chocolate, citrus, licorice, chalk, and savory fruits, with chocolate in the lingering, dusty finish. I sense this could be even better with a few years of bottle age. A large part of the success with the 2021 vintage here is the concentration that comes from yields of only 22 hectoliters per hectare. Blending 63% Cabernet Sauvignon, 33% Merlot, 3% Cabernet Franc, and 1% Petit Verdot. Drink from 2027-2050.”

- JL, [thewinecellarinsider.com](#)

“Dark in color, the wine opens with blackberry, boysenberry, flowers, cocoa, licorice, chocolate, and black cherry. The wine is soft, polished, elegant and refined, with silky tannins, energy, and purity to the fruit, which you can taste in the mid-palate. The finish delivers a precise note of chocolate-covered mint and cherries with a mineral, chalky endnote. 13.5% ABV pH of 3.65. The harvest took place September 22 through October 14. Yields were low at only 22 hectoliters per hectare. Drink from 2027-2047.”

- JL, [thewinecellarinsider.com](#)

“The 2021 here is a blend of 63% Cabernet Sauvignon, 33% Merlot, 3% Cabernet Franc and 1% Petit Verdot. Deep ruby colour. Plush vanilla spice, nutmeg and clove come together with brambly, juicy fruit on the nose. Smoky, ripe fruit leads the palate but firm, sandy tannins slowly take over. This is a structured, firm Smith Haut Lafitte, a different style to the recently seductive and ripe vintages here. Cool blackcurrants and riper, steeped berries push through on the finish to bring a little more of the usual character, but the pithy tannins endure.”

- TP, [Farr Vintners](#)

“The 2021 Smith Haut Lafitte was picked from September 22 to October 14, and matured in 60% new oak. It has an open, expressive bouquet of blackberry, freshly rolled tobacco and subtle crushed rock aromas, well-defined though obviously not as flamboyant as the previous three vintages. The palate is medium-bodied, fresh, and mineral-driven, with fine tannins, a touch of chalkiness, and hints of seaweed on the estuarine finish, even though it lies a few kilometers from the Gironde! Classic in style, and maybe a little austere for some on the finish, yet it feels long in the mouth. Fabien Teitgen and his team have overseen a superb Smith Haut-Lafitte, even though I suspect that it will not reach the heights of the 2010 or the 2016.”

- NM, [Vinous](#)

“The 2021 Smith Haut Lafitte is an engaging, dynamic wine. Gravel, menthol, licorice, mocha, and spice are all beautifully delineated. A wine of energy and focus, the 2021 is absolutely enthralling—medium in body, refined and super-impressive.”- AG, [Vinous](#)

“The 2021 Smith Haut Lafitte is fabulous. Rich and explosive in the glass, the 2021 possesses tremendous intensity, much of that the result of low yields of just 20-22 hectoliters per hectare, about half of what is typical here. The tannins are a bit firm today, but there appears to be more than enough fruit behind all of that structure. Vivid aromatics further suggest all the 2021 needs is time. I can't wait to see how it ages.”

- AG, [Vinous](#)

“The flagship 2021 Château Smith Haut Lafitte checks in as 63% Cabernet Sauvignon, 33% Merlot, 3% Cabernet Franc, and a splash of Petit Verdot. It's a rich, powerful wine, delivering lots of ripe black fruits (currants, some cassis), notes of scorched earth and graphite, medium to full body, ripe tannins, and a great mid-palate. It shows the straight, focused style of the vintage yet brings plenty of mid-palate depth, ripe, building tannins, and outstanding length. (JD) 93-95+.”

- [Jeb Dunnuck](#)

“SHL lost 45% of the crop from frost and also mildew. They were able to spray the entire property in just one day, but in the third week of June, it rained hard three times, and this meant that it was nothing short of a Sisyphean challenge trying to keep the vines protected! So, when you taste this wine, it is evident, right away, that it is a marvelous success. This is the epitome of refinement and length, and with a trademark blend, this is not only a superb rendition of SHL but also a stunningly refreshing and keenly balanced one. The fruit is already pliable and bright, and there is overall less tannin, but, equally, there is potential here. I imagine the idea drinking period will kick off around 2030 but last for longer than many would expect. 18+.”

- [Matthew Jukes](#)

Reviews *“Deep ruby, purple rim, discreet ochre tint. Subtle hints of liquorice and blackberry compote, fine wood spiciness and a touch of nougat. Medium complexity, elegant cherry fruit, good freshness, integrated, fine-grained tannins, salty-lemon finish; accessible soon, has ageing potential.”*
- PM, Falstaff Magazine

“The nose is fruity, fresh, elegant and reveals a lovely multi-layered, fine/racy texture and some depth. There are notes of violet, boysenberry and more slightly raspberry, fairly ripe red currant, blueberry combined with hints of star anise, caramelised almond, a discreet hint of sweet blond tobacco and a subtle hint of iodine, vanilla. The palate is fruity and offers juiciness, suavity, a nice definition, an acidic backbone, tension, accuracy, a discreet tightness/restraint. On the palate this wine expresses boysenberry, juicy/pulpy raspberry and more lightly blueberry notes combined with hints of chocolate, liquorice as well as a subtle sappiness, racy minerality, a discreet hint of bergamot, bourbon vanilla, graphite (in the background). Good length. Nice sapidity and positive bitterness on the finish/persistence. Some chewiness on the finish/persistence.”
- Vert de Vin
