

Château Lafon-Rochet 2020

CSPC# 866975

750mlx12

13.5% alc./vol.

Grape Variety 61% Cabernet Sauvignon, 33% Merlot, 3% Cabernet Franc, 3% Petit Verdot

Appellation Saint Estèphe

Classification Fourth Growth. Quatrieme Grand Cru Classe in 1855.

Website <http://www.lafon-rochet.com/en/>

Sustainability Organic

Analysis TA: 3.41 g/L pH: 3.68

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 chateau 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 Frédéric Renaut, cellar master. Jean-Claude Berrouet and Eric Boissenot consultants.

Vintage When it came to accommodating the hottest year on record since 1900, we relied on our in-depth knowledge of our soils and the resilience of our vineyards, which are in the process of conversion to organic agriculture. Thanks to significant levels of rainfall in winter and spring, the soils were able to retain sufficient water to counteract the effects of the summer drought. Very early on, we had to intervene in the vineyards, removing leaves to create a favourable microclimate that helped the vines resist the threat of mildew.

In 2018, we made the choice to refocus on our finest Saint-Estèphe terroir, which consists, in essence, of deep clay gravels (80% of our vineyards). That decision really paid off this year, with flowering taking place a week earlier on those gravels compared to the clay-limestone plots.

This early flowering, combined with the summer heat, permitted us to begin harvesting a few days earlier than in 2019, with the aim of preserving the 'al dente' character of the fruit. So, we started picking on 15th September and finished on 30th September 2020. The Merlots distinguish themselves by their remarkable depth. The Cabernet Sauvignon berries we picked were very small and concentrated, meaning that yields were lower than usual.

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. Chateau Lafon Rochet has good neighbors. They are ideally placed not far from



Vineyards	Chateau Cos d'Estournel and Chateau 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 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: September 21-29; Merlot: September 15-23; Cabernet Franc: September 19; Petit Verdot: September 29-30.
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 malolactic 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	Dark fruit, profound, mineral, cool flowers, mint. On the palate, a fruit concentrate without heaviness, excellent tannin quality, lots of freshness, the wood is perfectly integrated, all elements are in great harmony. Spicy, fresh finish. An excellent Lafon-Rochet.
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.
Production	2,000 cases made.
Cellaring	Drink 2023-2038
Scores/Awards	<p>90 points - James Molesworth, Wine Spectator - March 2023</p> <p>91+ points - William Kelley, Wine Advocate - April 2023</p> <p>92 points - Lisa Perrotti-Brown, The Wine Independent - March 2023</p> <p>91 points - James Suckling, JamesSuckling.com - January 2023</p> <p>93-94 points - James Suckling, JamesSuckling.com - May 2021</p> <p>93-95 points - Roger Voss, Wine Enthusiast - February 2023</p> <p>17 points - James Lawther, JancisRobinson.com - April 2021</p> <p>93 points - Jane Anson, Decanter.com - May 2021</p> <p>95 points - Jeff Leve, thewinecellarinsider.com - March 2023</p> <p>94-96 points - Jeff Leve, thewinecellarinsider.com - May 2021</p> <p>91 points - Tim Atkin, MW - timatkin.com (score only) - April 2021</p> <p>91-93 points - Farr Vintners - May 2021</p> <p>93 points - Neal Martin, Vinous - February 2023</p> <p>92-94 points - Neal Martin, Vinous - April 2021</p> <p>96 points - Antonio Galloni, Vinous - February 2023</p> <p>93-95 points - Antonio Galloni, Vinous - June 2021</p> <p>93 points - Jeb Dunnuck MW - March 2023</p> <p>93-95+ points - Jeb Dunnuck MW - May 2021</p> <p>94 points - Jean Marc Quarin (score only) - March 2023</p> <p>91-93 points - Peter Moser, Falstaff Magazine - May 2021</p> <p>95 points - Vert de Vin - May 2021</p> <p>92-94 points - Michael Schuster, The World of Fine Wine - May 2021</p> <p>17 points - Vinum Wine Magazine (score only) - September 2021</p>
Reviews	<p><i>"Plump and open, with a burst of loganberry and mulberry fruit backed by light tobacco, warm earth, and savory notes. Shows a savory edge, which moves to the lead on the finish. Solid. Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Cabernet Franc, and Petit Verdot. Drink now through 2034. 2,000 cases made."</i></p> <p>- JM, Wine Spectator</p> <p><i>"The 2020 Lafon-Rochet opens in the glass with aromas of cassis, plums, and licorice, followed by a medium to full-bodied, deep palate with good concentration, lively acids and plenty of powdery structuring tannin that asserts itself on the finish. This, too, is more structured than its 2019 counterpart and will require a bit of patience."</i></p> <p>- WK, Wine Advocate</p>

- Reviews** *“Lafon-Rochet 2020 has a deep garnet-purple color. It slowly unfurls to offer notes of baked plums and stewed black cherries, leading to wafts of cassis, cedar, and cinnamon toast. The medium-bodied palate is bright and soft, with a lively backbone and spicy lift on the finish.”*
- LPB, Wine Independent
- “Subtle dried spices and berries with chocolate undertones. It’s medium-bodied with fine tannins and a savory finish. Fresh and bright. From organically grown grapes. Drinkable now, but better in a year or two and onwards.”*
- JS, JamesSuckling.com
- “Blackberry and spice with firm, chewy tannins that show polish and focus. It’s medium-to full-bodied with excellent energy. Blackberry and blackcurrant character on the finish with a touch of cedar and spice.”*
- JS, JamesSuckling.com
- “Richly structured, powered by dark tannins and rich blackberry fruits, this estate has produced a very fine wine this vintage. The structure is considerable while keeping fruitiness and fine acidity in focus. The wine will certainly age well. Barrel Sample: 93-95.”*
- RV, Wine Enthusiast
- “Full bottle an admirably light 1,290 g. Cask sample taken 6 April. 61% Cabernet Sauvignon, 33% Merlot, 3% Cabernet Franc, 3% Petit Verdot. Deep lustrous purplish crimson. Interesting vitality to the nose, almost as though biodynamic techniques were employed here. Lovely balance of ripeness and vitality. This is a very successful 2020. It may be dismissed by some because the tannins are not obvious but it's a delightful drink – already! Very distinctive. Perhaps not for serious long-term cellaring but well done Basile Tesseron for producing something so appetising and groundbreaking. The finish is impressively persistent. 13.5%. Drink 2025 – 2040.”*
- JL, JancisRobinson.com
- “Attractive, well-paced fruits, plenty of clarity to the flavours, together with a feeling of linearity to the tannins. Austerity through the mid-palate constrains the brambled cassis fruit, but things build back up again, and this is a measured, successful wine that will age well. 3% Petit Verdot completes the blend. First year with Eric Boissenot accompanying Jean-Claude Berrouet as consultants. Barrel Sample: 93.”*
- JA, Decanter.com
- “Flowers, cigar wrapper, wet earth, smoke, chocolate, blackberries, and red pit fruits open the nose. But it is on the palate, where the wine really shines with all of its layers of full-bodied, concentrated, long, dark, round, energetic, creamy, plush, ripe, fruits. The finish is long, clean, and vibrant with a creamy textured endnote that will be even better once the minor amount of oak remaining has fully integrated. This is the final vintage from the Tesseron family who brought in the harvest and vinified the wine. The new owner, Jacky Lorenzetti, along with Emmanuel Cruse finished the wine. Starting with the 2021 vintage, the new owners were fully in charge. Drink from 2024-2045.”*
- JL, thewinecellarinsider.com
- “Deeply colored, the wine is full-bodied, concentrated, long, dark, round, dark and energetic. The fruits are plush, ripe, sweet, and fleshy. The mid-palate shows off its blend of cassis, blackberry, cocoa, tobacco leaf and spice with little effort. The finish is long, clean, and vibrant with a creamy textured endnote. This should age and develop nicely for at least 2-3 decades.”*
- JL, thewinecellarinsider.com
- “The 2020 Lafon-Rochet was bottled at the end of June. It has quite an expressive bouquet, leaning more towards black fruit, touches of undergrowth and pencil box. This is very harmonious and actually quite similar in style to the Phelan-Segur. The palate is medium-bodied with very pliant tannins, well-judged acidity, fresh and displaying commendable depth. Hints of black pepper and cedar, a pleasing strictness on the finish, whereas I commented that it was quite Pomerol-like out of barrel, now it is much more Pauillac in style, with graphite lingering on the aftertaste. Excellent.”*
- NM, Vinous

Reviews

“The 2020 Lafon-Rochet was picked September 15–20 and marks the first collaboration between consultants Jean-Claude Berrouet and Eric Boissenot, who both worked on the blending. It has a really lovely bouquet of blackberry, briar and faint estuarine scents, hints of crushed iris flowers emerging with time. The palate is medium-bodied with grainy tannins and modest depth, and quite fleshy; lip-smacking salinity urges you to take another sip. Intriguingly, it comes across a tad Pomerol-like on the finish, completing a top-notch Lafon-Rochet that may well end up at the top of my banded score. Drink 2024-2044.”

- NM, Vinous

“The 2020 Lafon-Rochet represents the essence of classicism in Bordeaux. Medium in body and finely-cut, Lafon-Rochet is one of the classiest, more refined Saint-Estèphes readers will come across. Dark fruit, earthiness, lavender, licorice, menthol, and cloves add nuance, but it is the wine's balance and vibrancy that impresses most. Give the tannins a few years to melt away. Superb. Best after 2030.”

- AG, Vinous

“The 2020 Lafon-Rochet is fabulous. The aromatics along are dazzling. Gracious and yet effusive, with tons of nuance, the 2020 dazzles from start to finish. Inky dark fruit, new leather, spice, lavender, and menthol fill the room with soaring intensity. Silky, elegant, and so pure, Lafon-Rochet is shaping up to be one of the real under the radar gems of 2020. It's a terrific effort from Basile Tesseron. Don't miss it.”

- AG, Vinous

“Showing the pretty, elegant style of the vintage, the 2020 Chateau Lafon-Rochet exhibits a ruby/purple hue to go with a perfumed bouquet of ripe black cherries, spring flowers, graphite, and violets. Medium-bodied and elegant, with firm tannins, it needs 4-6 years of bottle age and should evolve for two decades in cold cellars. Best After 2027.”

- Jeb Dunnuck

“I loved the 2020 Château Lafon-Rochet, a rich, powerful, concentrated Saint-Estèphe that stays beautifully balanced and elegant. Lots of pure cassis and darker currant fruits as well as tobacco, chocolate, and damp herb notes define the nose, and it's medium to full-bodied, with plenty of mid-palate depth, building tannins, and a great finish. It's going to take 7-8 years to hit the early stages of maturity, but it's a brilliant wine. The blend is 61% Cabernet Sauvignon, 33% Merlot, and the rest Cabernet Franc and Petit Verdot, with an alcohol of 13.5 and a pH of 3.68. Tasted twice.”

- Jeb Dunnuck

“Dark ruby, opaque core, purple reflections, broadening rim. Delicate nougat, fine blackberry fruit, black cherries, discreet herbal savouriness. Medium complexity, fine forward fruit, ripe cherries, silky tannins, pleasant mineral texture, a touch of chocolate; open and approachable.”

- PM, Falstaff Magazine

“On the nose elegant, racy and offers power, fine concentration, harmony, and a certain subtle density/depth. It reveals notes of wild raspberry, wild blackberry and hints of sweet spices associated with touches of nutmeg, crushed strawberry, ripe cherry/big cherry as well as hints of grey pepper, nutmeg, fine points of incense, Szechuan pepper and a discreet touch of vanilla. On the palate, fruity, ample and offers juiciness, freshness, minerality as well as a certain gourmandize, an acidic frame, a hint of tension, richness justly mastered, roundness and a certain purity of fruit. The wine expresses notes of pulpy/juicy blackberry, crushed raspberry and hints of pulpy/juicy wild strawberry associated with touches of bright blue plum, lilac, cornflower, star anise as well as hints of cardamom, chocolate, toast, a subtle hint of vanilla and an imperceptible hint of tea in the background. The tannins are precise and mellow. Good length.”

- Vert de Vin

“(61% CS, 33% M, 3% CF, 3% PV; 13.5% ABV) Freshly cassis-sweet to smell, a hint of gravel; medium-full, fresh in acidity, very finely tannic; succulently rich yet restrained, a classic “drier” claret profile, but freshly sweet-cored, beautifully textured, long, and graceful, concentrated without being in any way thick, and with an absolutely lovely farewell, a perfect mirror of all the tastes before. Classy, complete, aristocratic wine. 2030–50+.”

- MS, The World of Fine Wine
