

Chateau Lafite-Rothschild Pauillac 1990 - 1st Growth Cru Classé

Quick Overview

The yield was abundant and of outstanding quality. Excellent climatic conditions for the harvests. Very deep color. A complex bouquet with currant, blackberry, smoke, leather, and spice aromas. You can fathom just a hint of oak. The bite is sincere and elegant, with many tight and mature tannins. It has a silky texture, and a very long finish. This wine may be preserved for a very long time.



History:

Chateau Lafite-Rothschild is one of the Bordeaux First Growths in Pauillac appellation controllee, and possesses a long history of exceptional quality. In the 17th century, the vineyards were owned by Alexandre de Segur, also proprietor of Chateau Latour. After the French revolution, the chateau was purchased by several Dutch merchants before the current owners, the Rothschild family, acquired it in 1868.

Chateau Lafite-Rothschild is one of the largest Medoc estates, producing 15,000 to 25,000 cases per year. The grand vin is composed primarily of Cabernet Sauvignon (up to 95%) with the balance divided between Merlot, Cabernet Franc and Petit Verdot. 1994 and 1961 are exceptions, however, and consist of 99% and 100% Cabernet Sauvignon, respectively. Part of the estate's production goes to its second wine called Carruades de Lafite (previously names Moulin des Carruades) which is produced from up to 70% Cabernet, with a larger proportion of Merlot. The best vintages of Lafite include 1918, 1846, 1945, 1947, 1959, 1961, 1982, 1990, 2000, 2003, and 2005. Lafite has a balanced elegance supported by the structure of its tannins. It is both full-bodied and silky. Aromas include currant, leather, graphite and tobacco. As Lafite ages, it reveals more minerals, as well as almond, violet, and cedar.

Tasting Notes:

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Wine Spectator:

Very serious fruit, with juicy berry, tobacco and cedar character. Slightly more body than the 1989, but they are very close in character. I would give this a little more time. '89/'90 Bordeaux non-blind horizontal. Best after 2007.

Score: 95. February 28, 2005.

Wine Advocate:

As I suspected, the 1989 and 1990 vintages of Lafite-Rothschild have gone dormant. Both wines were among the more closed, backward examples in my blind tasting. The 1990 is riper, richer, and more textured, but mouthsearing tannin and a closed personality make it hard to fully assess. The wine possesses excellent richness, a hint of the unmistakable Lafite perfume of minerals, cedar, lead pencil, and red fruits, medium to full body, moderate weight, admirable richness and overall balance, and a tough finish. Give it a decade of cellaring to shed some tannin and evolve; it may be a 40-50-year Lafite. As outstanding as I believe it will ultimately turn out to be, I do not think the 1990 Lafite will ever match the sheer class, quality, and complexity of the 1988, 1986, and 1982. Anticipated maturity: 2006-2035.

Score: 92. —Robert Parker, February 1997.