



CHÂTEAU LAFITE ROTHSCHILD 2003

■ VINEYARD ATTRIBUTES

Appellation : AOC Pauillac, Bordeaux, France

Pauillac is located on the left bank of the Gironde estuary, approximately 40km North of Bordeaux. With the tempering influence of the estuary and a great diversity of soils originated from both the Massif Central and the Pyrenees, Pauillac boasts exceptional climatic and geological conditions to make outstanding wines.

Terroir : Chateau Lafite Rothschild is located to the north of the appellation, bordering Saint-Estèphe. The vineyard consists of three main areas : the hillsides around the Château, the adjacent Carruades plateau to the west, and 4.5 hectares in Saint Estèphe appellation. The vineyard covers 112 hectares with soil made up of fine deep gravel, mixed with aeolian sand on a subsoil of tertiary limestone. It is well-drained and benefits from optimal sun exposure.

■ VINTAGE SUMMARY

From October 2002 to September 2003, total rainfall was only 555 mm (the average annual rainfall is 850 mm). However, this low rainfall had little effects as the soil remained relatively cool and the vines did not suffer from lack of water. The vintage owes its original characteristics to the excessive heat the first fortnight of August. Temperatures were truly exceptional (above 40°C), halting the ripening process and reducing berry size.

The harvests were very early and quick, taking place from 8 to 24 September under excellent conditions. The relatively small sized berries gave little juice during the running-off period.

■ WINE MAKING SCHEME

In order to reveal the magic of Lafite's terroir, every step of the wine elaboration is carried out with the greatest precision. Depending of their provenance and level of ripeness, grapes will be transferred into either wooden, stainless steel or concrete vats. Alcoholic fermentation is conducted at controlled temperature, with regular pumping over to gently release all the phenolic compounds in the grapes. Each vat is carefully monitored and tasted daily in order to determine the best racking time. The maceration period varies for each tank but is around 22 days in total.

After malolactic fermentation wines are transferred into French oak barrels. Lafite has its own cooperage in Pauillac, la Tonnellerie des Domaines, which contributes to its unique style. The selection for the grand vin is made in March, once the wines have settled and start revealing their full potential. Every barrel is tasted individually and only the best ones are set aside for the final blend.

Once blended, the wine is aged for a further 15 months in barrels, primarily of new oak.

■ TASTING NOTES

When tasted during the 'Futures', the wine proved to be particularly rich, intense and unctuous with nice rounded tannins that offered a convivial side to the wine at this very early stage.



TECHNICAL INFORMATION

Varietals : Cabernet sauvignon 86%, Merlot 9%, Cabernet franc 3%, Petit verdot 2%

Yield : 51 hL/ha

Alcohol content : 12.5 % vol.

Total acidity : 3.31 g/l