

# P O R T R A I T S D ' A C T E U R S



► Florence Cathiard

« Every vintage is like the birth of a new child : full of promise, mystery and risks. There is an element of heritage and upbringing. The result is wines that are living things, each with its own 'vintage' identity but all sharing the same family likeness, like children conceived in the same bed. »

# FLORENCE CATHIARD

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Florence Cathiard is the daughter of a philosophy teacher and a senior secondary education teacher of literature. During her youth, Florence managed to combine a



high level sports career in the French Alpine skiing team with an equally high level of college education. Having married her childhood sweetheart Daniel Cathiard, she helped him launch the chain of sports stores GO SPORT, then opened her own advertising agency and pursued her career within the Mc Cain group. Then came the life-changing decision to invest everything in the vineyard of Château Smith Haut Lafitte, Great Classified Growth of Graves which she owns in partnership with her husband. She learned important 'winning' lessons from her athletic past - bravery, patience, endurance - all of which she needed to succeed in the world of great wines.

# LE CHÂTEAU SMITH HAUT LAFITTE



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This is one of the oldest Bordeaux wine properties, dating back to the Crusades, indicated by the three lily flowers which adorn the château's coat of arms. Surrounded by vines and woods and located on the top of a hill of gunzian gravels from the quaternary period, the estate spreads over 120 hectares which includes wooded areas, fields, prairies and a lake, but more importantly 68 hectares of vines 55 of which are for red wine production. The first years were ones of difficulty. In 1991 was marked by a late frost, followed by 1992, when it rained continuously.

Undaunted, Florence forged ahead, with Daniel at her side. « My husband had decided to become a creative craftsman, far from material trivialities, so it

was up to me to keep shop! » she jokes. First she chose a team, led by Fabien Teitgen, an agronomic engineer and oenologist who favours organic farming methods.

« Our role is to respect nature, not to destroy it », explains Florence. Hence the practice of early ploughing in Autumn, to ensure that the grapes germinate more easily, and a late ploughing in May to complete the cycle. Equally important is the natural compost made on the property (horse manure, pruned vine shoots and grape-pomace), which rejuvenates the soil and revitalizes the micro-organism population. The pruning is done according to the moon's cycle (during the waning moon period).





## PROGRESS

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In the past 19 years, Château Smith Haut Lafitte has undoubtedly become one of the flagship estates of the appellation, both for its red and its white wines. Florence puts 50% of this success down to the 'terroir' « the graveliest of gravels » as described by Bernard Ginestet and the other

50% to the daily efforts aimed at obtaining absolute quality.  
Les Sources de Caudalie complex is located in the heart of the vineyard and offers a luxurious setting without unnecessary frills, which attracts tourists from all over the world in its famous hotel and vinotherapy spa. There is a real harmony in both the atmosphere and style of the spa which reflects the unity of this family. Florence and her family have succeeded in creating a very special and welcoming world which is very much their own, on the outskirts of Bordeaux.

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TRANSLATED BY MAXINE COLAS

Pour tout savoir sur le Château Smith Haut Lafitte :  
**[www.smith-haut-lafitte.com](http://www.smith-haut-lafitte.com)**

Plus de photos : <http://www.jbnadeau.com/>

Translated by Maxine Colas, TripAdvisor : <http://www.france-wine-chateaux.com>