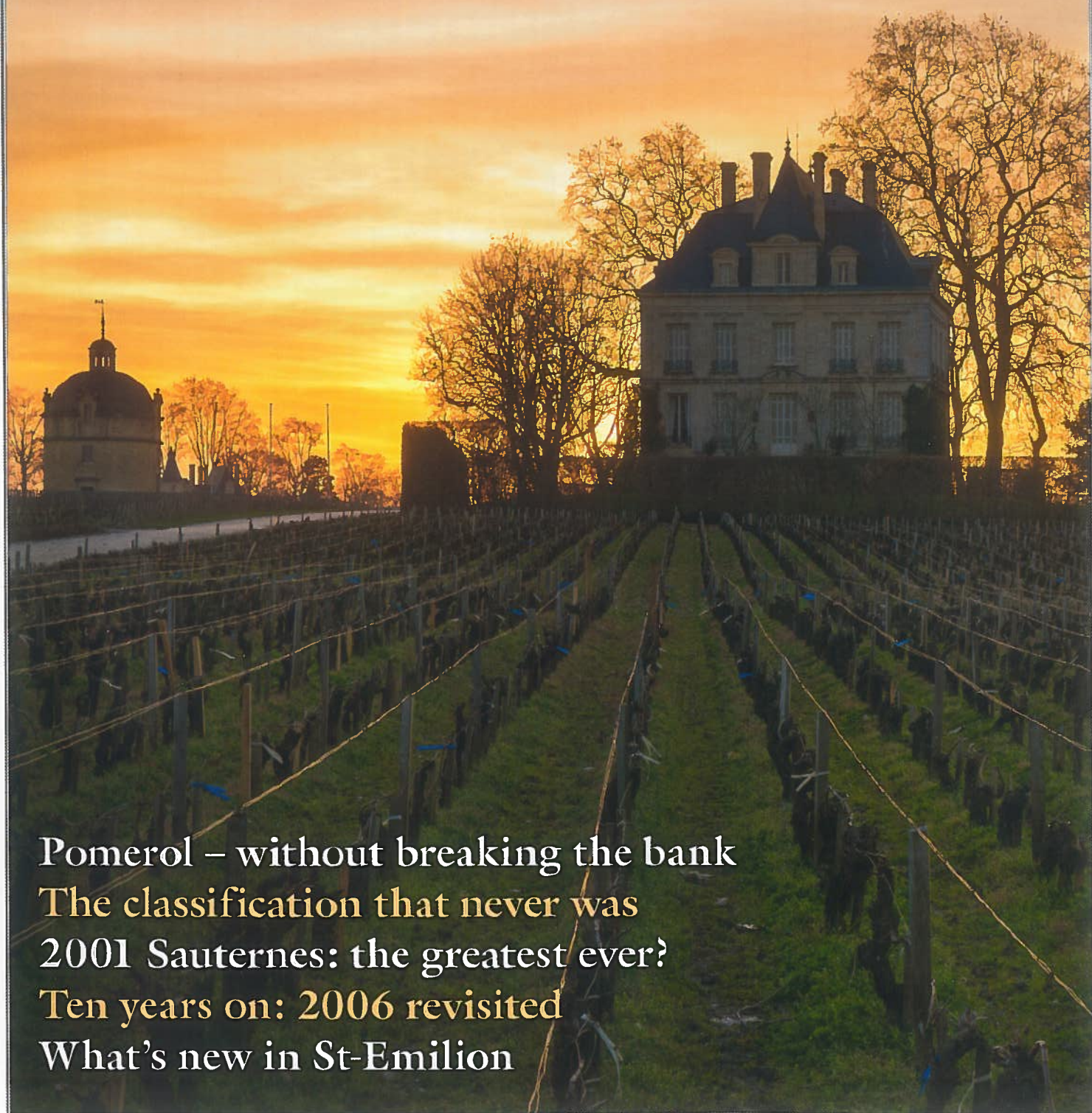


The world's best wine magazine

2016 issue

Decanter

Bordeaux



Pomerol – without breaking the bank

The classification that never was

2001 Sauternes: the greatest ever?

Ten years on: 2006 revisited

What's new in St-Emilion

Fronsac & Canon-Fronsac

Striving to capture some of the glory of their illustrious neighbours St-Emilion and Pomerol, these two appellations can offer good value, reports Jane Anson

IT MUST BE tough to be located five minutes from St-Emilion. To know that you have the same limestone terroir across much of the hillsides – that parts are even a continuation of the same plateau, and share the same cavernous underground cellars – and yet to be so much less recognised than your neighbour.

A look at land prices shows how much ground Canon-Fronsac and Fronsac have to make up. Although Canon-Fronsac reaches an average of €60,000 per hectare compared to €30,000 for Fronsac, both are significantly less than the €200,000 in St-Emilion (according to 2014 figures issued by the Libourne town hall), and nowhere near Pomerol at €900,000. And just 24% of the region's production is exported, compared to 40% of Bordeaux as a whole.

This means there are plenty of opportunities to find value across both appellations from winemakers who are determined to be taken seriously. The 2012 vintage was good news, as generally speaking the weather favoured Right Bank Merlots. Flowering was far from perfect, but August saw sunny weather that carried on to October. Merlot and most Cabernet Franc were harvested under perfect conditions. In theory Fronsac produced good wines that are available at reasonable prices – in our tasting, prices range from £9 to £30.

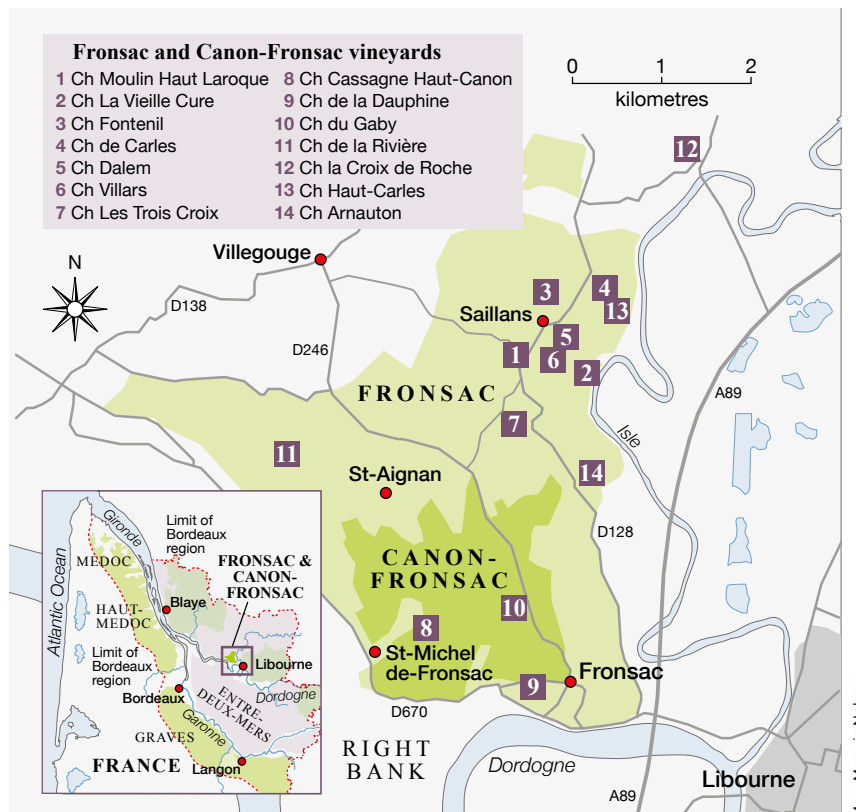
Merlot heartland

In terms of wine styles, these are classic Right Bank, so Merlot-heavy. In Fronsac 80% of the vines are Merlot, with the rest Cabernet Franc and Cabernet Sauvignon. You will almost never find Petit Verdot, though a few winemakers, such as Jean-Noël Hervé at Château Moulin Haut Laroque, are experimenting with Malbec.

It's also not hugely helpful to look for distinct styles between the two appellations. In theory Canon-Fronsac is higher quality and more structured, but in reality there are excellent wines in both – although estates located around the village of Saillans perhaps have the advantage of elevation and terroir. Here you'll find names such as Châteaux La Vieille Cure, Fontenil, de Carles, Dalem and Villars.

In general, Fronsac and Canon-Fronsac can fall down in two areas. Some taste too hard, austere and earthy compared to the Merlot usually found in St-Emilion or Pomerol; while others have high levels of new oak, leading to vanilla drenching, or are too concentrated and tannic due to overly reduced yields. The best go for balance: making the most of the lean savouriness of Fronsac tannins while adding plump fruits and floral edging. Besides those mentioned above, established names worth looking out for include Châteaux Les Trois Croix, Cassagne Haut-Canon and La Dauphine.

Jane Anson is Decanter's Bordeaux correspondent and the author of Bordeaux Legends



Fronsac & Canon-Fronsac: know your vintages

2014 A highly promising year that has become known as the 'turnaround vintage' for its perfect late season.

2013 Perhaps the most difficult vintage since 1997. The best have refreshing drinkability, but should be consumed young.

2012 This year was underestimated at the time. Generally speaking, the Right Bank fared best, where Merlot was able to ripen in hot summer weather before the rains of late September arrived.

2011 A strange year, with summer in spring, autumn in summer, spring in autumn. Merlot was uneven, but there are some enjoyable early-drinking wines.

2010 One of the winning vintages of the past few decades. Success on both Left and Right Banks. Merlot kept its acidity and fruit aromatics intact.

2009 Ripe, rich, full of flavour. Fronsac did well, as limestone terroir and Cabernet Franc kept alcohol in check. Be wary of over-oaking.

Fronsac & Canon-Fronsac: the facts

Location Right Bank of the Garonne, 25km east of Bordeaux

Area under vine 1,050ha (hectares): 800ha in Fronsac, 250ha in Canon-Fronsac, with 106 winemakers in Fronsac and 47 in Canon

Annual production 37,350hl (hectolitres) in Fronsac (5m bottles); 9,800hl in Canon-Fronsac (1.68m bottles)

Export 20% Fronsac, 30% Canon-Fronsac

Grape varieties Merlot covers 80% of the area; the rest of the vines are Cabernet Franc and Cabernet Sauvignon, on clay-limestone soils ➤

The results

This Right Bank area is a happy hunting ground for value wines, including many here from the underrated 2012 vintage, said our experts. Amy Wislocki reports

THIS IS A fine historical vineyard area,’ observed Steven Spurrier. ‘Just look at all the grand châteaux in Fronsac and you can see how highly regarded the wines were in the 18th century – they must have been making a lot of money throughout the 1800s.’

‘But today Fronsac and Canon-Fronsac are among the least valued appellations in Bordeaux,’ said Stephen Brook. ‘Producers can’t charge terribly high prices for their wines, or they would find them completely impossible, rather than just difficult, to sell.’

And yet, there’s much to like, agreed our tasters. ‘What I look for – and what I found in a lot of these wines – is generous black fruits and judicious use of oak, but not at the expense of vigour and freshness,’ continued Brook. ‘Some of the wines lack nuance, but the generosity of fruit should compensate for that.’

‘A very nice tasting,’ agreed Margaret Rand. ‘These are good weekday clarets, with good balance. They didn’t suffer from over-extraction or over-oaking, which they sometimes have done in the past. There was a little rusticity and greenness, but hey, I’m English, I don’t mind a bit of greenness – it can add freshness.’

You do have to choose your vintage carefully though, she cautioned, as it’s a marginal area and so vintage differences shine through. All three agreed that 2012 was the star of the show here. ‘It’s an underrated year, and many of the wines were absolutely delicious,’ said Brook. ‘As there’s a lot of clay in this area you can get ferocious tannins, especially in an unripe year. But 2012 was sufficiently ripe that there weren’t many harsh tannins.’ He agreed that there were a few wines that exhibited rusticity and/or greenness, ‘but the majority were well made, balanced, juicy and enjoyable.’

Is the difference between Fronsac and Canon-Fronsac apparent in the glass? No, said our tasters. ‘I don’t think anyone could tell the difference in a blind tasting,’

‘Good weekday clarets, which don’t suffer from over-oaking or over-extraction’ Margaret Rand

commented Brook. ‘Since 2014 the rules and regulations for both appellations have been identical, and the terroir is pretty much the same in both areas. The two different appellations probably exist for political reasons.’

Are these wines to lay down? ‘They varied in style,’ said Brook. ‘Some were appealing and limpid and could be enjoyed fairly young. Others were more structured and demanding, and required some cellaring. The best will go on for another decade or so without any problem.’

‘There shouldn’t be any great rush to drink Fronsac,’ he added. ‘These are wines with structure – sometimes even too much structure.’

Spurrier admitted to feeling slightly underwhelmed at the end of the tasting: ‘Some of the wines had florality, which I loved, but I expected the vigour of this area to come through more, rather than the rusticity. At their best these wines can easily rival grand cru St-Emilion, and even grand cru classé St-Emilion. But some of these lacked precision. These showed as good weekday claret – as Michael Broadbent would say: “Good, workmanlike wines”. But they are capable of more.’

‘If you want to drink lesser claret, this is a very good place to look,’ concluded Rand. ‘They are jolly good value,’ agreed Brook. ‘Most wines will be under or around the £20 mark, and the best of them get close to St-Emilion, which will be two or three times the price at that quality. There were a lot of wines here that I would be happy to drink, and to have in my cellar – especially at these prices,’ he concluded.

The scores

48 wines tasted
Exceptional
0
Outstanding
0
Highly Recommended
16
Recommended
19
Commended
11
Fair
1
Poor
1
Faulty
0

Entry criteria: producers and UK agents were invited to submit their latest-release of Fronsac or Canon-Fronsac. Two wines per producer were permitted.

The judges

Stephen Brook



Brook began his writing career in 1982 and has been a contributing editor to Decanter since 1996. He is Chair of the Bordeaux panels at the Decanter World Wine Awards and has served as an international wine judge around the world. The author of more than 30 books, his works include Bordeaux: People, Power and Politics (2007) and The Complete Bordeaux (2007, second edition 2012).

Margaret Rand



Margaret Rand is a past editor of Wine Magazine, Wine & Spirit International and Whisky Magazine. She has won several Roederer and Lanson awards and now writes for World of Fine Wine, Drinks Business, Decanter and Imbibe among other publications. She is general editor of the annual Hugh Johnson’s Pocket Wine Book and co-author (with Oz Clarke) of Grapes & Wines.

Steven Spurrier



Steven Spurrier is a consultant editor of Decanter and joined the wine trade in 1964. He moved to Paris to open a wine shop in 1971, later launching L’Academie du Vin in 1973 and staging the historic Judgement of Paris tasting in 1976. He has won several awards, including Le Personnalité de l’Année for services to French wine, and is chairman of the Decanter World Wine Awards and Decanter Asia Wine Awards.

Highly Recommended 90–94pts



Château La Croix de Roche, Collection Privée, Fronsac 2012 Decanter average score: 93/100pts Individual judges’ scores: Stephen Brook 90 Margaret Rand 95 Steven Spurrier 93

N/A UK +33 5 57 84 38 52 Ripe, autumnal berry fruit aromas. Rich and broad; a supple and juicy style, with fruit and texture. Nicely balanced with well integrated tannins and acidity; overall a wine which will be a star. Drink 2016-2035 Alc 13.5%



Château Arnauton, Fronsac 2012 91 SB 87 MR 93 SS 94

£12.50 (2009) World Wines Black fruits and graphite on the nose, it is savoury with very good natural ripeness on the palate and fine oak. Classic and structured, there is elegant depth and complexity to come. A serious wine with lovely poise. Drink 2016-2040 Alc 13.5%



Château Gaby, Canon-Fronsac 2012 91 SB 92 MR 91 SS 89

£22 Whitehalls A very ripe nose of damsons and chocolate. Rich and svelte on the palate, with fine-grained tannins and impressive density of fruit. Some nice grape skin notes balance the richness, giving good lift to the palate. Lush, opulent and harmonious with a long, zesty finish. Drink 2016-2030 Alc 14%



Château Canon St-Michel, Canon-Fronsac 2012 90 SB 90 MR 89 SS 92

N/A UK www.vins-millaire.fr Forward and silky with good depth of fruit, elegantly expressed with some florality, while retaining Fronsac’s robustness. There is a slight rusticity yet nicely balanced. Appetising and succulent with a long and fresh finish. Drink 2016-2026 Alc 13.5%



Château Vrai Canon Bouché, Canon-Fronsac 2012

£12-£15 Crump Richmond & Shaw, Fine & Rare, 92 SB 93 MR 93 SS 91 Sturdy, oaky black fruits on the nose, with a good weight of fruit and natural ripeness. Robust and forceful on the palate, with a savoury edge and ample structure, this is a very well judged and understated gem of a wine. Drink 2016-2030 Alc 14%

‘There shouldn’t be any great rush to drink Fronsac. These are wines with structure’ Stephen Brook



Château Magondeau, Passion de Magondeau, Fronsac 2012 91 SB 92 MR 93 SS 87

N/A UK www.chateauamagondeau.com A ripe and classic nose of cigar box and graphite, with some florality. Medium-bodied, it is stylish and graceful with delicious, well-expressed red fruits and some herbal notes, very aromatic and very long. Here is a serious wine that sings. Drink 2016-2035 Alc 14%



Château Capet Bégaud, Canon-Fronsac 2010 90 SB 91 MR 93 SS 87

N/A UK www.chateau-coustolle.eu A robust and meaty nose, this is a bold and voluptuous wine, very rich and concentrated, with formidable tannins. Lots of well-extracted fruit and a dense, tannic structure, there is good acidity, some freshness and quite a long finish. Drink 2016-2030 Alc 15%



Haut-Carles, Fronsac 2012 92 SB 94 MR 93 SS 89

£21 Asset Wines Rich, toasty, blackberry and blackcurrant nose with good extraction of meaty Merlot fruit. Fleshy, chocolatey, compact and tannic, it has evident structure and elegance with a long, spicy finish. A wine to keep for a bit. Drink 2016-2040 Alc 14%



Château de La Rivière, Fronsac 2012 91 SB 93 MR 89 SS 90

£15 Enotria & Coe Young, exuberant and very ripe black fruits on the nose, with some florality. Quite a savoury palate, with a light touch and almost delicate tannins, this is a well balanced, decent claret with fairly good length and a chocolately finish. Drink 2016-2028 Alc 14%



Château Barrabaque, Prestige, Canon-Fronsac 2012 90 SB 91 MR 89 SS 89

N/A UK www.chateaubarrabaque.com Sweet, juicy, blackberry and blackcurrant nose. Zesty, with an oaky lift. Good richness for 2012, it’s certainly forward yet supple and balanced, with freshness and ample acidity that carries the wine through to a good meaty finish. Drink 2016 2027 Alc 14.5%



Château Hervé-Laroque, Fronsac 2012 90 SB 91 MR 89 SS 91

£16-£19 Asset Wines An opulent, slightly charred nose, with dense blackberry fruit. The palate brings lots of freshness and lift, with a fine natural ripeness and bold, chewy tannins. It is slightly rustic and quite long. A very good modern Fronsac. Drink 2016-2026 Alc 14.5% ➤

Highly Recommended (continued) 90–94pts



Château Moulin Pey-Labrie, Canon-Fronsac 2005 90 SB 91 MR 93 SS 87
POA Private Cellar
A lovely cedary, herbal, tobacco nose, the palate very poised, silky and complex with plump, meaty fruit. Nicely mature, this is a concentrated wine with firm tannins. A wine of charm and conviction, it is at its best but will endure a while. **Drink** 2016-2025 **Alc** 14%



Château Villars, Fronsac 2012 90 SB 95 MR 81 SS 93
£25-£30 Justerini & Brooks, Robert Anthony
Fine black fruits on the nose with some florality. There is considerable purity of fruit that is concentrated and slightly rustic, but not too dense. With fine-grained tannins and an overall impeccable balance, this wine has good length and vineyard expression. **Drink** 2016-2030 **Alc** 14%



Galand, Château Canon, Canon-Fronsac 2012 90 SB 90 MR 89 SS 90
£29.99 Ashdown Wines
Fine natural red and black fruits on the nose. Has a suave texture, with more elegance than power. Fresh and juicy with a fruit-derived vivacity on the palate, this is a well-balanced wine. Very attractive, harmonious and long. **Drink** 2016-2025 **Alc** 13%



Junayme, Canon-Fronsac 2014 90 SB 89 MR 89 SS 91
N/A UK +33 5 57 51 64 06
Fresh and light but nicely poised with florality and ripeness on the nose, it is smooth and rich with ripe strawberry fruit and a suave texture thanks to the integrated tannins. This is an elegant, classy wine, with modest length. **Drink** 2016-2030 **Alc** 13.5%



Vignobles Hermouet, Clos du Roy, Fronsac 2012 90 SB 92 MR 89 SS 89
N/A UK www.vignobleshermouet.com
Black fruits on the nose. Youthful, fleshy fruit and bright acidity; fresh yet opulent with some tannic grip too. Balanced with nice precision and elegance, plus a long, firm finish, this is a wine with a future. **Drink** 2016-2030 **Alc** 14%

‘At their best these wines can easily rival grand cru St-Emilion, and even grand cru classé St-Emilion’
Steven Spurrier

Recommended 86–89pts

Wine	Score	SB	MR	SS	Tasting note	Alc	Drink	Price	Stockists
Château de Carles, Fronsac 2012	89	89	87	90	Nicely concentrated autumnal fruit on the nose. A bit tight, though well assembled and balanced, with appealing fruit and fair acidity.	13.5%	2016-2024	N/A UK	www.hautcarles.com
Château Du Gazin, Canon-Fronsac 2012	89	92	89	86	An earthy, lush black cherry nose; ripe, juicy and slightly toffeed, fruit cake palate. Tannins need time, but fine acidity and a long finish.	14%	2016-2030	£11.99	Waitrose
Château Les Trois Croix, Fronsac 2012	89	92	84	91	A meaty and autumnal nose. There is some freshness of blackcurrant fruit. This is a rustic, medium-bodied wine with a solid finish.	14%	2016-2028	£15	Ellis of Richmond, Millésima
Château Mayne-Vieil, Cuvée Alienor, Fronsac 2012	89	87	92	89	Ripe cherry nose, with leafy mocha tones; creamy and supple with good expression of fruit, mild tannins and acidity. A slightly alcoholic finish.	14%	2016-2035	£11.50	Great Grog, Noel Young
Dubois, Bozelle, Fronsac 2014	89	86	93	89	Plump blackberry fruit nose; concentrated, punchy and assertive with the odd green touch. This has good weight and poise with medium length.	13.7%	2017-2030	N/A UK	+33 5 57 51 73 78
Château de La Dauphine, Fronsac 2012	88	89	88	86	A toasty blackberry and meaty nose with supple, juicy palate. There is ample fruit and a chewy rusticity.	15%	2016-2025	£15-£20	Asset Wines, Millésima, The Wine Society
Château Jeandeman, La Chêneraie, Fronsac 2012	88	89	85	89	A savoury, tobacco nose, quite rich and concentrated, with good vineyard expression; this has weight and drive.	13%	2016-2030	N/A UK	www.roy-trocard.com
Château Tour Canon, Canon-Fronsac 2012	88	85	90	88	Discreet black cherry nose with some florality; pretty and light with brisk, ripe tannins, this is graceful and very well balanced.	13%	2016-2030	£9 (2010)	World Wines
Château Fontenil, Fronsac 2011	87	87	88	85	Floral and a bit green. There is good robust fruit in a light year. Hefty tannins demand patience; a pretty wine, and fairly long.	14%	2016-2025	£17-£19	Bancroft
Château Magondeau, Beau Site, Fronsac 2012	87	86	90	84	Slightly meaty and herbal. Supple and rounded, with good weight of fruit and firm but ripe tannins, leading to a long finish.	14%	2016-2030	N/A UK	www.chateaumagondeau.com
Château Moulin Haut Villars, Fronsac 2012	87	82	91	89	Quite young, cherry nose; supple smoothness of fruit and good structure that is taut and poised. A serious wine; this will be good.	13.5%	2016-2040	£15-£20	Justerini & Brooks, Robert Anthony Wines

Recommended (continued) 86–89pts

Wine	Score	SB	MR	SS	Tasting note	Alc	Drink	Price	Stockists
Château Roulet, Canon-Fronsac 2012	87	87	84	90	Florality and red/black fruits nose with plump, juicy, solid fruit and firm tannins. Slightly leathery and rustic, good typicity and a long finish.	13.5%	2016-2030	£20	Le Cave de Bruno
Vignobles Dubech, Château des 3 Seigneurs, Fronsac 2011	87	91	85	86	Lush, toasty, blackberry nose. Supple and concentrated with firm tannins, spice and pepper giving complexity. Well balanced, it is appetising and long.	13.5%	2016-2025	N/A UK	www.vignoblesdubech.fr
Château Coustolle, Canon-Fronsac 2012	86	82	89	88	Finely expressed red fruit aromas with slight herbaceousness; tobacco and coffee tones. Soft and rounded with ripe fruit and some grip. Drink now.	13%	2016-2025	N/A UK	www.chateau-coustolle.eu
Château Grand Renouil, Canon-Fronsac 2012	86	90	83	85	Quite earthy, autumnal nose. It is velvety and plump, with the tannins and acidity in balance. Robust, juicy and spicy, with a slightly rustic finish.	14%	2016-2030	£25-£28	Fields Morris & Verdin, Woodwinters
Château Junayme, Château Canon, Canon-Fronsac 2014	86	85	86	87	A light, fresh, blackberry nose. This is quite lean with good ripe fruit and tobacco notes; classic with a spicy finish, it has a good future.	14%	2016-2030	N/A UK	+33 5 57 51 64 06
Château La Rousselle, Fronsac 2011	86	82	92	84	Nice expression of Fronsac fruit with violet aromas. Concentrated spice and fruit, tobacco with meaty tannins, medium length and fine structure.	13.5%	2016-2020	£30	H2Vin
Château La Vieille Cure, Fronsac 2012	86	88	80	90	Dense, oaky, black fruit nose with some vanilla. Rich, plump fruit with some force and acidity; tannins are integrated, if a little chewy.	14%	2016-2025	£18.95 (2004)	From Vineyards Direct
Château Lafond, Canon-Fronsac 2012	86	83	90	85	Fresh, red summer fruits nose. The palate is soft-textured, with some natural elegance and good precision, plus some spice on the finish.	13.5%	2016-2030	N/A UK	www.chateau-mazeris.com

Commended 83-85pts

■ **Château Labory, Fronsac 2011** 85, 14%, 2016-2018, N/A UK www.chateaulabory.unblog.fr ■ **Château Richelieu, Fronsac 2012** 85, 13.5%, 2016-2020, N/A UK www.chateau-richelieu.com ■ **Vignobles Dubech, L'Enclos St Louis, Canon-Fronsac 2011** 85, 13.5%, 2016-2027, N/A UK www.vignoblesdubech.fr ■ **Château Cassagne Haut-Canon, La Truffière, Canon-Fronsac 2012** 84, 13.5%, 2016-2024, POA Vine Trail ■ **Château Dalem, Fronsac 2013** 84, 13.5%, 2016-2030, £13.50 Crump Richmond & Shaw, Fine & Rare ■ **Château**

Les Roches de Ferrand, Fronsac 2012 84, 13.5%, 2016-2022, N/A UK www.vignoblesrousselot.free.fr ■ **Château Mayne-Vieil, Fronsac 2012** 84, 14%, 2016-2022, £10.75 Boutinot ■ **Château Tessendey, Fronsac 2012** 84, 13%, 2016-2020, £15 Alistair Nugent ■ **Château Beausejour, Fronsac 2012** 83, 13.5%, 2016-2020, £10.50 Haynes Hanson & Clark ■ **Château Mazeris, Canon-Fronsac 2013** 83, 14%, 2016-2030, N/A UK www.chateau-mazeris.com ■ **Château Vray Houchat, Fronsac 2012** 83, 13.5%, 2016-2022, N/A UK +33 5 57 24 95 16

Fair 76-82pts

■ **Château Haut Lariveau, Fronsac 2009** 82

Poor 70-75pts

■ **Château Tour Bel-Air, Fronsac 2010** 72

For full UK stockist details, see p122

My top three
Stephen Brook

- **Château Vrai Canon Bouché** The splendid fruit and structure of this wine show why some define Fronsac as an extension of the St-Emilion plateau. This property is consistent, but new corporate owners took over in 2014, so the future is less certain. **93 Drink** 2016-2030
- **Haut-Carles** This is the prestige cuvée of Château de Carles, a handsome Renaissance property run by well-heeled but quality-driven owners. Always fleshy and concentrated, Haut-Carles never disappoints; mostly new oak is impeccably integrated. **94 Drink** 2016-2040
- **Château Villars** I first bought this wine in 1982. Recent vintages show delicious fruit, considerable freshness, elegance from the 20% Cabernet Franc in the blend, and welcome polish and flair. Like all the best Fronsacs, this will age well. **95 Drink** 2016-2030

My top three
Margaret Rand

- **Château Vrai Canon Bouché** There's a lot of limestone in the vineyard, hence the freshness and tautness of this predominantly Merlot wine. The tannins are beautifully handled and everything is restrained: it doesn't shout. **93 Drink** 2016-2030
- **Château Arnauton** The south-facing slopes here have produced a most elegant wine; appetising and sappy. It's basically Merlot with a bit of Cabernet Franc and a dash of Malbec, and it's far from being one of the more famous properties in the region. So it's a bit of a find. **93 Drink** 2016-2040
- **Château La Croix de Roche** From an organic vineyard on the banks of the River Isle (which joins the Dordogne at Libourne), this is 100% Merlot from sandy clay soil. In the mould of Pomerol, but without the price-tag. **95 Drink** 2016-2035

My top three
Steven Spurrier

- **Château Arnauton** A fine 24ha estate overlooking the River Isle. Arnauton's wines are as classy as its label: deep young colour, lots of black fruits on the nose and very good natural ripeness on the palate, fine use of oak, elegance and complexity to come. A modern wine in the best sense. **94 Drink** 2016-2040
- **Château Villars** I used to buy this wine for my Paris shop in the 1970s and 1980s and was pleased to see that the warm extraction of fruit is still there. On the nose there is florality from the Cabernet Franc and on the palate the vineyard is expressed with clarity, length and balance. **93 Drink** 2016-2030
- **Château Les Trois Croix** The great Patrick Léon, for many years chief winemaker at Mouton-Rothschild and still an in-demand consultant, oversees the final blends here. The 2012 shows meaty, autumnal blackberry fruit, with supple depth and charm. The 2007 in my cellar is quite delicious now. **91 Drink** 2016-2028

NB: the tasters' top wines are not necessarily their top-scoring, rather those which, on learning the wines' identity, they feel are the most notable given their provenance, price or other factors

Expert summary: Jane Anson

A respectable performance from the 2012 vintage proves that these appellations are a reliable choice for good-value Bordeaux and hints at even better quality to come



Jane Anson is Decanter's Bordeaux correspondent and the author of Bordeaux Legends

THE RESULTS OF the tasting largely bear out the idea that 2012 is a solid and mostly successful vintage, with plenty of pleasurable drinking on offer. Many of the descriptions of the wines highlight the classic Right Bank assets: ripe, sweet autumnal fruits, fleshy, supple, juicy... all the things that you come to Fronsac for, but that aren't always achievable in more difficult vintages. Although there were no Outstanding wines, of the 48 wines tasted 16 were scored 90 or above, taking them into the Highly Recommended bracket. For wines that come in at under £30 across the board, that has got to be an impressive result, especially for an appellation that remains stubbornly under the radar. Many of the most respected names are in this top section of the tasting, including Château Gaby and Château de La Rivière – and it's good to know that the top wine, Château La Croix de Roche, is farmed organically.

In total, 19 further wines came in with a score of between 85 and 89, so Recommended. At the lower end of the scale, only two wines in the entire tasting didn't receive at least a Commended. This means that well over half of the tasting made it onto the board in positions that would equal Bronze or Silver medals in the Decanter World Wine Awards – and all of the higher priced

Fronsacs (so over £15 retail price per bottle) were recognised as medal winners. In this Recommended section are some wines that have proved extremely consistent over recent vintages, such as Château Les Trois Croix, owned by Patrick Léon, ex-winemaker at Mouton Rothschild, and Château de La Dauphine, another estate that is farming organically and biodynamically (certified this year, and just starting its certification process in this 2012 vintage). These are wines that by-and-large are for drinking now and over the next decade, as you would expect from their Merlot-dominant blends, although Château Haut-Carles and Château Arnauton in particular were singled out for their ageability. Overall, this is a tasting that bears out the idea that Fronsac and Canon-Fronsac have come out fighting in recent years, trying to inch their way back to prominence on the Right Bank map. **D**

It's good to know that the top wine, Chateau la Croix de Roche, is farmed organically'

DISCOVER THE FINEST FRONSAC WINES
FROM THIS PROUD BORDEAUX APPELLATION ...

Château Barrabaque
Château Dalem
Château Fontenil
Château Gaby
Haut-Carles
Château de La Dauphine
Château de La Rivière
Château La Vieille Cure
Château Les Trois Croix
Château Moulin Haut-Laroque
Château Moulin Pey-Labrie
Château Villars

12 OUTSTANDING PRODUCERS