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# La renommée réapparaît pour les appellations de vins Fronsac et Canon-Fronsac

Contributeur **Tom Mullen** ⓘ**Voyage***J'écris sur le mode de vie, la nourriture et le vin depuis une base en France*

Vue aérienne des vignes à Fronsac et de la Dordogne GETTY

Les 65 différentes appellations de vins de Bordeaux dans le sud-ouest de la France comprennent des «satellites», nommés en partie pour leur proximité géographique avec des appellations plus renommées.

Deux de ces appellations satellites sont **Fronsac** et **Canon-Fronsac**, situées à environ six miles (10 kilomètres) à vol d'oiseau à l'ouest du village de Saint-Émilion sur la rive droite de Bordeaux (à l'est de la Dordogne et de l'estuaire de la Gironde). Les trois quarts de la superficie totale de 2 506 acres (1 014

hectares) de ces appellations appartiennent à Fronsac et le reste à Canon-Fronsac.

Ce terrain pittoresque est riche d'histoire. Les Romains y ont produit du vin et ont établi un marché. Charles le Grand-roi des Francs-construit un autel sommet d' une colline sur cette terre au 8ème siècle, alors que dans le 9<sup>e</sup> siècle , un roi viking nommé Hastings pillée cette région.

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The terrain includes [hills and plateaus underlain by clay-limestone soils](#). The majority of wine chateaux [are family owned](#), and most are less than 25 acres (10 hectares) in size. This landscape includes a temperate microclimate, influenced by waters of the nearby Isle and Dordogne rivers. Wines produced here are all red, and vines grow above clay-limestone [Fronsadais molasse soils](#), as well as over siliceous clays near the foot of hills.

The appellations include a higher percentage of international wine châteaux owners than any other Bordeaux wine appellation. No doubt they are attracted by more reasonable land prices than in Saint-Émilion and Pomerol, by proximity to Libourne and Bordeaux cities, and by beautiful limestone bluffs that overlook the Dordogne river.



Winter vines in Fronsac (Photo by Philippe Roy) GAMMA-RAPHO VIA GETTY IMAGES

According to [one source](#), in the mid-18<sup>th</sup> to part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, wines of the best estates in these appellations rivaled—in price and reputation—those from nearby Saint-Émilion and Pomerol. The decimation of vines by the phylloxera louse reversed that trend.

In a [1986 article for The New York Times](#), Frank J. Prial wrote about ‘little vineyards that probably haven’t changed much since Charlemagne built a fortress there more than a thousand years ago.’

Yet Prial also predicted that change was coming, attributing that partly to the purchase of local chateaux—La Dauphine and Canon de Brem—by renowned Pomerol and Saint-Émilion winemaker Christian Moueix. He mentioned the splendor of Château de la Rivière and its ‘superb chalk caverns carved deep into the hills behind the château.’ He also noted that the wines of Canon-Fronsac are ‘rich and supple; the Fronsac wines, harder and more ‘rustique’.

His prediction aligned with critics noting, by the end of that decade, improvements to local winemaking techniques. In his book *A Vineyard in My Glass*, [Gerald Asher wrote](#):

‘...the associations of growers of Fronsac and Canon-Fronsac had arranged for me a comprehensive tasting of their 1985’s, again with a backdrop of older



wines for perspective. Reviewing the high and consistent quality of those wines while remembering others tasted twenty-five years before, I felt I had strayed into a school of frogs turned to princes.’

Asher attributed these improvements to the acquisition of new presses as well as fermentation tanks and barrels, and also to greater sharing of information and techniques by neighboring vintners.

During a livestream tasting earlier this month I spoke with Damien Landouar —Director General of [Château Gaby](#), which is located in Canon-Fronsac. (Landouar was also appointed as the new representative of the Council of Fronsac Wines [[Conseil des Vins de Fronsac](#)] in 2019). Château Gaby was purchased by American Tom Sullivan in 2016. Before, it had been owned by a Canadian, and before that was British owned.

Landouar spoke about local appellations and soils.



Vines in Fronsac, Bordeaux, France GETTY

“Fronsac and Canon-Fronsac are tiny appellations, about 1,000 hectares, so not very big. Château Gaby is located in Canon-Fronsac. It’s 16 hectares [39 acres] in size, and in terms of soils Canon Fronsac and Fronsac are not really different. The only difference for Canon-Fronsac is we are more on the slope, on elevation. The limestone is probably the most important thing for us in Canon-Fronsac. The landscape is just amazing because you are on top of the River Dordogne, and it’s really beautiful.

“Princess Gaby is the second wine of the estate. It is made from grapes from a selection of plots growing on the molasse of Fronsac—a mixture of limestone, clay and sand—a very special soil. It gives very nice round wine, very fruity.”



Château Gaby, Canon-Fronsac CHÂTEAU GABY/OFFICE DE TOURISME DU FRONSADAIS

“The region is traditional. A few properties, such as Château de la Dauphine and Château de La Rivière, make special places for visitors and tourists. We did the same here eight years ago with our tasting room. Fronsac is changing year after year and we are very proud of our region. It’s beautiful here. The lifestyle is very good.

“For me 2019 vintage was different because we changed a little bit the way we are making wine to something more focused on fruits and elegance.”

After months of lockdown, the château and region are ready for visitors.

“We are open all summer and very welcome to receive people. We’d love to welcome you in Fronsac and Canon-Fronsac.”

Below are tasting notes for some 2019 wines from these two appellations.

**Château Gaby. Canon-Fronsac. Princess Gaby. 2019. (94 points)**

This 80/10/10 blend of Merlot, Cabernet Franc and Cabernet Sauvignon includes a beautifully light, clear and precise range of aromas of florals and red and black fruit—including violets—as well as aromas of sandalwood, clover and morels. In the mouth, this is a juicy red with tastes of mandarins, plums as well as mint and tarragon. Pair with blackened fish or beef bourguignon.

### Chateau Plain-Point. Fronsac. 2019. (94 points)

Ce mélange 90/5/5 de Merlot, Cabernet Franc et Cabernet Sauvignon comprend des arômes d'hickory, de mûres, de framboises, de cèdre et de menthe verte. En bouche, cela inclut des goûts de cerises moelleuses, d'anis, de brownies, de gingembre et de sel. Comprend une impulsion acide avec une charge en profondeur de saveurs de fruits noirs et seulement une épine dorsale tannique légèrement perceptible, qui se marie à merveille avec l'acidité juteuse. Accompagnez-le d'agneau, de steak au poivre ou de thon noirci.

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Tom Mullen

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# Renown Re-Emerges For Fronsac And Canon-Fronsac Wine Appellations

**Tom Mullen** Contributor ⓘ

Travel

*I write about lifestyle, food and wine from a base in France*

Aerial view of vines within Fronsac, and the Dordogne River GETTY

The 65 different Bordeaux wine appellations in southwestern France include ‘satellites,’ named partially for their geographical proximity to more renowned appellations.

Two such satellite appellations are [Fronsac](#) and [Canon-Fronsac](#), located some six miles (10 kilometers) as the crow flies west of the village of Saint-Émilion on the right bank of Bordeaux (east of the Dordogne River and the Gironde

Estuary). Three quarters of the total land area of 2,506 acres (1,014 hectares) of these appellations belongs to Fronsac, and the balance to Canon-Fronsac.

This scenic terrain is rich with history. Romans produced wine here and established a market. Charles the Great—King of the Franks—built a hilltop altar on this land in the 8th century, while in the 9<sup>th</sup> century a Viking king named Hastings pillaged this region.

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### Chateau Plain-Point. Fronsac. 2019. (94 points)

This 90/5/5 blend of Merlot, Cabernet Franc and Cabernet Sauvignon includes aromas of hickory, blackberries, raspberries, cedar and spearmint. In the mouth this includes tastes of chewy cherries, aniseed, brownies, ginger and salt. Includes an acidic pulse with a depth charge of dark fruit flavors and only a mildly discernible tannic backbone, which melds beautifully with the juicy acidity. Pair with lamb, pepper steak or blackened tuna.

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