

Château Pontet Canet 2020

CSPC# 813917

750mlx6

13.5% alc./vol.

Grape Variety	60% Cabernet Sauvignon, 32% Merlot, 4% Cabernet Franc, 4% Petit Verdot
Appellation	Pauillac
Classification	Fifth Growth. Cinquieme Grand Cru Classé in 1855.
Website	http://www.pontet-canet.com/en/pages/chateau-pontet-canet
Sustainability	Biodynamic & Organic
General Info	5th classified growth in 1855. Jean-François de Pontet, royal governor of the Médoc, combined several vineyard plots in Pauillac in the early 18th century. Years later, his descendants added neighbouring vines in a place named Canet. This was the beginning of one of the largest estates in the Médoc, which quite naturally added the name of its founder to that of the land registry reference. A century later, Pontet-Canet was included in the famous 1855 classification, thereby confirming its membership among the elite of the Médoc. This privileged position did not go unnoticed by one of the most important Bordeaux shippers of the time, Herman Cruse, who bought the estate in 1865. He built new cellars, modernised the winemaking facilities, and established the wine's reputation around the world. The Cruse family owned Pontet-Canet for 110 years, until another shipper (from Cognac this time), Guy Tesseron, acquired it in 1975. Currently owned by Guy Tesseron's sons, Alfred, and Gérard, this means that Pontet-Canet has belonged to only three families in over two centuries.
Winemaker	Jean-Michel Comme. Michel Rolland consultant winemaker.
Vintage	After an especially mild winter, the 2020 growing season began with a very warm March and April (2.25°C warmer than average), which brought about an early bud-break in the vines on 21st March and with it the happy prospect of an early harvest! The vine cycle thus got off to an almost perfect start. However, the first period of wet weather, which came at the end of April and particularly during the weekend of 8th May, brought 80mm (3.15 inches) of rain in the space of a few hours. Our Cabernet vines then enjoyed 3 weeks of fine, sunny weather during which they flowered quickly. With the new moon on 23rd May, conditions quickly changed: rain fell heavily until 20th June. We had no wish to relive what we experienced in the 2018 vintage, when our vines were subject to a severe attack of downy mildew. Having learnt from previous vintages, we made sure that we were well equipped to fight off the fungus with purpose, cohesive teamwork, and innovation. We prepared horsetail tea sprays together with decoctions of willow and buckthorn that we had picked from the fields at the estate. These were applied on a daily basis by our vineyard team and enabled the vines to build up their defenses throughout this critical period. The results were to be seen in mid-July at the time of the veraison: very little of the crop was lost to disease, and the vintage was spared! 2020 was never going to be a smooth, stress-free vintage, though. Boiling-hot weather at the beginning of August was followed by violent rainstorms (85mm/3.35 inches), which swelled the grapes and weakened the skins. By halting soil ploughing earlier than usual and not trimming the vine shoots, the leaves and weeds were able to evaporate this surplus water, and this allowed the berries to regain their normal size. We knew right from the start of the season that this 2020 vintage would be a very early one, and the harvesting dates soon confirmed it. 2020 proved to be a year of challenges, which our new technical director, Mathieu Bessonnet, rose to in brilliant fashion. Thanks to our biodynamic approach, and the vine-growing and wine-making practices that have been established, together with the sterling efforts of all the teams, this new Pontet-Canet vintage is once again a faithful reflection of its terroir.
Vineyards	Thirty years after their arrival in Pauillac, the Tesserons can be proud of having gradually restructured the entire vineyard as well as renovating the cellars and service buildings. Château Pontet-Canet is located in the heart of the Pauillac appellation, just south of châteaux Mouton Rothschild and d'Armailhac. It has the poor gravelly soil typical of the greatest vineyards. In fact, the soil has so much gravel and sand that it is difficult to



Vineyards	<p>imagine that anything could grow there at all. The château's winegrowing philosophy is to intervene as little as possible and as naturally as possible in the vineyard. Only traditional viticultural and cultivation practices are used. Chemical weed killers are banned in keeping with environmental protection, and priority is given to the vine's long-term health. Fertilisers are uniquely organic, and only used on plots that genuinely require extra nutrition. This helps to maintain a good balance and self-regulated low yields, as well as to respect the vines, reflect the terroir, and produce pure, natural wine. In 2003, a purification station was built. 2005 was the first harvest using biodynamic practices throughout the whole property of 81 hectares. In 2005, the second vat room was restored and modified at the image of the first one which dates back to the 19th century, with concrete truncated cone-shaped vats allowing fermentation by natural gravity flow, without the use of pressure or pumping. A part of the vineyard is worked with horses since 2008. Soil: quaternary gravel on a subsoil of clay and limestone; Area: 81 hectares. Average age of the vines: 35 years; Density of the vines: 9000 feet per hectare: Yield: 45 hectolitres per hectare</p>
Harvest	<p>Picking began in fine, sunny weather on 14th September with the Merlot, followed by the Cabernet Franc on the 21st and then the Cabernet Sauvignon. Our Petit Verdot was brought in on 25th September, and the harvest was completed with the last of our Cabernet on the 30th of the same month.</p>
Maturation	<p>In the cellars, with the aid of our sorting and manual de-stemming system that we introduced back in 2017, we were able to select the finest grapes. With the high quality of the fruit harvested, very little intervention was required in the vinification process. We simply allowed our grapes to "infuse" while from time to time plunging the cap of skins by hand into the must. Aging in 50% new French oak barrels, 35% in amphora and 15% in one-year old casks.</p>
Winemaker's Notes	<p>2020 proved to be a year of challenges, which our technical director, Mathieu Bessonnet, rose to in brilliant fashion. Thanks to our biodynamic approach, and the vine-growing and wine-making practices that have been established, together with the sterling efforts of all the teams, this new Pontet-Canet vintage is once again a faithful reflection of its terroir.</p>
Serve with	<p>Chateau Pontet Canet is best served at 15.5 degrees Celsius, 60 degrees Fahrenheit. The cool, almost cellar temperature gives the wine more freshness and lift. Chateau Pontet Canet is best paired with all types of classic meat dishes, veal, pork, beef, lamb, duck, game, roast chicken, roasted, braised, and grilled dishes.</p>
Production	<p>Approx. 25,000 cases made.</p>
Cellaring	<p>Drink 2023-2040</p>
Scores/Awards	<p>92+ points - William Kelley, Wine Advocate - April 2023 96-98+ points - Lisa Perrotti-Brown, Wine Advocate - May 2021 97 points - Lisa Perrotti-Brown, The Wine Independent - February 2023 96-98 points - Lisa Perrotti-Brown, The Wine Independent - June 2022 98 points - James Suckling, JamesSuckling.com - January 2023 98-99 points - James Suckling, JamesSuckling.com - May 2021 97 points - Roger Voss, Wine Enthusiast - February 2023 96-98 points - Roger Voss, Wine Enthusiast - June 2021 17 points - Jancis Robinson, JancisRobinson.com - April 2021 17 points - James Lawther, JancisRobinson.com - April 2021 97 points - Georgina Hindle, Decanter.com - January 2023 96 points - PK, Decanter.com - April 2021 97 points - Jane Anson, Decanter.com - May 2021 97 points - Jane Anson, janeanson.com - January 2023 95 points - Tim Atkin, MW - timatkin.com (score only) - April 2021 95 points - Neal Martin, Vinous - February 2023 94-96 points - Neal Martin, Vinous - April 2021 95+ points - Antonio Galloni, Vinous - February 2023 95-97 points - Antonio Galloni, Vinous - June 2021 97 points - Jeb Dunnuck MW - March 2023 95 points - Jean Marc Quarin (score only) - April 2021 93-95 points - Peter Moser, Falstaff Magazine - May 2021 95-96 points - Terres de Vins (score only) - September 2021 97 points - Andreas Larsson, Tasted - May 2021 93-94 points - Michael Schuster, The World of Fine Wine - May 2021 19.5 points - Vinum Wine Magazine (score only) - September 2021</p>

Reviews *“While Justine Tesson declined my request to taste at the property, I was able to acquire a bottle of the 2020 Pontet-Canet for review. The wine starts strong, wafting from the glass with attractive aromas of cherries, sweet berries and plum preserve mingled with lilac and licorice, but that's followed by a medium to full-bodied, firm and extracted palate that lacks the amplitude and flesh to conceal the rather drying tannins which dominate the earthy finish. It's an open secret among Bordeaux insiders that this estate—which has benefited from such significant and laudable investments, and which was on such an upward trajectory through 2011—has been a perplexingly erratic performer since 2012, intermingling successful vintages with relative failures, and the 2020 only confirms that. While the 2020 isn't by any means a flawed wine, and time may well be kind to it, it doesn't transcend this estate's fifth growth status, even if this château's terroir clearly has the potential to.”*
- WK, Wine Advocate

“The 2020 Pontet-Canet is a blend of 60% Cabernet Sauvignon, 32% Merlot, 4% Cabernet Franc and 4% Petit Verdot, aging in 50% new French oak barriques, 35% concrete amphorae and 15% in one-year-old barrels. Harvest began on the 14th of September for the Merlot, and the final lot of Cabernet Sauvignon was harvested on 30th September. Opaque purple black in color, it needs significant aeration and swirling to coax out evocative notes of black cherry preserves, raspberry pie, blackcurrant pastilles and damp soil, before launching into gorgeous floral and spice notions of red roses, cinnamon stick, star anise and cardamom, with a waft of crushed rocks. The medium to full-bodied palate reveals a lot of depth and polish, delivering mouth-coating red and black fruits with loads of fragrant earth and floral sparks, framed by velvety tannins and seamless freshness, finishing long and mineral tinged. This is a singular, fascinating expression of the vintage and highly recommended!

Reviews *“The difference in our wine is really how we work in the vineyard,” said Justine Tesson, who now works very closely with her father Alfred Tesson, owner of Château Pontet-Canet. “Every year we go to another level. First, we have great terroir. My grandfather was avant-garde when he chose our site. Then with the approach my father developed—biodynamics. But, as you know, every year is challenging because of the conditions. In 2018, we lost two-thirds of production because of mildew. In 2020 we were very scared. We didn't want to have the same situation. Our vineyard people were very motivated. We didn't miss any treatments—even on Saturday and Sunday. We HAD to be in the vineyard. Everyone was there. In the end, we didn't lose any crops due to mildew. We kept it contained and it did not spread to the grapes.” “It was also challenging because of the very warm, dry days,” she added. “We had a bit of drought. But all the treatments we use, based on plants, have meant that the vineyard is in good balance. It was not too much affected by the drought. At Pontet-Canet we don't deleaf or do green harvest. The leaves protected the grapes.” I asked Justine about the rains that occurred in mid-August—85 millimeters (3.35 inches)—nearly a month after the start of veraison. She said, “Yes, I think we managed the rain well. Mathieu Bessonnet, our technical director, decided to leave the grass growing between the rows this year, in anticipation of water. The grass was quite high. It managed to soak up a lot of the water. The berries were in good condition afterwards. We did not get dilution.” In the end, Pontet-Canet came through with yields that were just slightly lower than 2019, which was a relatively generous year for this estate. And the wine? Absolutely singular. Absolutely Pontet-Canet.”*
- LPB, Wine Advocate

“Composed of 60% Cabernet Sauvignon, 32% Merlot, 4% Cabernet Franc, and 4% Petit Verdot, the 2020 Pontet-Canet is deep garnet-purple colored. It needs a lot of swirling and aeration to coax out notes of crushed blackcurrants, blueberry compote, and candied violets, leading to suggestions of allspice, fertile loam, kirsch, and dark chocolate with a touch of Indian spices. The medium-bodied palate delivers a firm backbone of grainy tannins with loads of bright, perfumed red and black fruits and seamless acidity, finishing long and fragrant. This is stunning.”
- LPB, Wine Independent

“The 2020 Pontet-Canet, a blend of 60% Cabernet Sauvignon, 32% Merlot, 4% Cabernet Franc, and 4% Petit Verdot, was tasted as a barrel sample. Deep garnet-purple colored, it gallops out with energetic scents of warm cassis, blueberry pie, and Morello cherries, plus suggestions of pencil lead, damp soil, and crushed rocks with an alluring waft of jasmine tea. Full-bodied, rich, concentrated, and oh so decadent, it is built like a brick house with firm, grainy tannins, and seamless freshness, finishing long and spicy.”
- LPB, Wine Independent

Reviews

“Aromas of blackcurrants and black cherries with hints of crushed walnuts, grilled thyme, cocoa powder, and graphite. It’s full-bodied with layers of ultra-fine, silky tannins that elegantly coat your palate, allowing the juicy and vibrant fruit to shine. Delicate and pristine, yet compact with lots of energy and power to uncover in the coming years. It lasts for minutes and is delicious now. The purity of fruit is really impressive. 60% cabernet sauvignon, 32% merlot, 4% cabernet franc and 4% petit verdot. 50% new oak, 15% old oak and 35% concrete amphorae. Try after 2027.”

- JS, JamesSuckling.com

“This is integrated, with superb density and beauty, offering blackcurrant, mineral and some bark. Full-bodied, yet so polished and refined. Crushed stone. Lots of expression and texture to this wine. Creamy. Pure and precise. Elegant, yet layered. Slightly plusher than the 2019. Dense, yet agile. Fresh as always. 60% cabernet sauvignon, 32% merlot, 4% cabernet franc and 4% petit verdot. 50% new oak, 15% old oak and 35% concrete amphorae.”

- JS, JamesSuckling.com

“The magnificent structure and balance of this wine are powerful. It shows the poise between the black fruits and the freshness of the vintage, while the texture is almost velvet. The wine is juicy and seriously structured at the same time.”

- RV, Wine Enthusiast

“96–98. Barrel Sample. Aromatic black currant and spice aromas give way to a wine that has richness while having impressive balance. The freshness shines with tannins that give a velvet character to the wine’s texture. The fruitiness should not deceive from its longevity, so age this wine for many years. Organic and biodynamic.”

- RV, Wine Enthusiast

“Very dark, dense crimson. Quite a compelling nose. And the fruit and tannin seem well balanced with a frank expression. This should mature into something really exciting. Real energy here. 17/20 points.”

- JR, JancisRobinson.com

“60% Cabernet Sauvignon, 32% Merlot, 4% Cabernet Franc, 4% Petit Verdot. Cask sample. Dark, dense, and very ripe on the nose. Riper than most Pauillac’s tasted. Suave attack then a firm charge of grainy tannin. Fresh and persistent but some chew on the finish. (JL) Drink 2027 – 2040.”

- JL, JancisRobinson.com

“Dark chocolate, bramble tones, not overly floral or fruity with some cedar and cinnamon notes. Lovely high acidity straight away, forward, bright, and energetic with lovely crunchy blue fruit on the palate but creamy textured tannins giving a round and complete mouthful. Nothing feels overdone, this is quietly seductive and confident but not at all showing off. I love the minerality and the graphite grip with plum and black cherry and tons of slate, liquorice, and menthol freshness. Long finish, slowly expansive, building and growing from start to finish showing an impressive structure overall. Nicely constructed, charming still with the Pauillac touch. A great Pontet - immediately seductive and enjoyable with a long ageing potential.”

- GH, Decanter.com

“Pure black and red berry fruit, very primary as a barrel sample, as expected. At 13% alcohol, it comes across as rather opulent, with tannins somewhat foreboding at this very early stage, which is normal. What impresses is the pristine and pure fruit; a very juicy expression that exudes both density and finesse on the long finish. Bravo! Drinking Window 2026 – 2070.”

- PK, Decanter.com

“Highly successful Pontet, one of the few Pauillac’s that, for me, overperforms on its 2019. Inky purple with ruby reflections in colour. Lots of firm but upright tannins, a good dollop of graphite, pencil lead and cassis bud, there is depth through the mid palate shot through with wild blackberry, hawthorn, sage, rosemary, and wild mint. It has personality and is a little old school in the best possible way. Recommended. They have avoided the over-concentrated feel of some Pauillac’s in the vintage, while remaining true to the appellation. 4% Petit Verdot completes the blend, 50% new oak 35% amphoras, 15% one-year barrels. First full vintage for Mathieu Bessonnet who replaced the previous long-term director Jean-Michel Comme in 2020. 100% first wine, as it has been for the past four years. 45% will be aged in new oak barrels, 15% one year, 40% in amphoras. The mildew pressure was stressful in the early part of the year, but they had learnt from 2018, and brought in the

Reviews *manpower to get around the whole vineyard in a (very long) day, so their yields ended up being close to normal. Drinking Window 2028 – 2042.”*

- JA, Decanter.com

“A powerful character to this wine, touch of oyster shell, soy, salinity, but also creamy with energy, lift and precision, and a violet character that you find increasingly in Pontet Canet. Plenty of Pauillac signature in its tannic grip and heft, with cocoa bean and slate. Deft and exceptionally successful.”

- JA, janeanson.com

“The 2020 Pontet Canet, which was picked from 14 September, has quite a plush bouquet with blackberry, raspberry coulis, cedar, and light touches of espresso that hover in the background. Fine delineation. The palate is medium-bodied with firm tannins. There remains a noticeable and indeed pleasurable sprinkling of black pepper complementing that black fruit. Quite structured on the finish (more so than previous vintages) with a gentle but insistent grip. Unquestionably this is more classically styled than the recently blind-tasted 2019 and should mature well in bottle. Excellent.”

- NM, Vinous

“The 2020 Pontet Canet, picked from 14 to 30 September, has a well-defined bouquet with scents of black cherries, raspberry, crushed iris, and violet. This is demonstrating more delineation than the 2018 that was tasted just a couple of days previously. The palate is medium-bodied with quite a spicy entry, a liberal sprinkling of black pepper and a hint of cedar. Fine structure and focus here. It is fresh with a touch of pencil lead towards the finish, and a touch of pepper lingering on the aftertaste. Here, I can taste Pauillac DNA, which has been my pet peeve in recent vintages. I look forward to revisiting this in bottle. Tasted at the estate with Alfred and Justine Tesseron. 2027 – 2053.”

- NM, Vinous

“The 2020 Pontet-Canet is a potent, brooding wine that really seems to reflect the richness of the year in its flavor profile and overall feel. Today, the 2020 is quite dark and somber, although aeration gradually brings out floral top notes that convey freshness. The 2020 is an exotic Pontet-Canet that that will require time. The 2020 spent 14-16 months in the cellar, in the combination of 50% new oak, 35% amphora and 15% once-used barrels.”

- AG, Vinous

“The 2020 Pontet-Canet is captivating effort from the Tesseron family. The intensely perfumed, savory bouquet is immediately alluring. Deep and substantial, the 2020 is luxuriously rich from start to finish. Swaths of incisive tannin wrap around a core of dark red cherry fruit, gravel, dried herbs and rose petal, and a whole range of floral and savory accents lend aromatic presence. The Pontet-Canet is often a charmer en primeur, but the 2020 comes across as quite serious. I can't wait to see how it develops. As always, one of the signatures of Pontet-Canet is a high proportion of Merlot vis-à-vis its peers among top Left Bank châteaux that lends tremendous midpalate weight. In 2020 production is within historical norms. Mildew pressure was high, but not as severe as in 2018, when two-thirds of the crop was lost in a single day. Harvest took place September 14–30, a bit more of a compact time frame than normal, and a good 7–10 days earlier than is typically the case. Aged in 50% new oak, 35% amphora and 15% once-used barrels.”

- AG, Vinous

“The flagship from this estate, the 2020 Château Pontet-Canet is a beauty based on 60% Cabernet Sauvignon, 32% Merlot, and 4% each of Cabernet Franc and Petit Verdot, brought up in 50% new oak, with 35% in amphora. Deep purple-hued with a great nose of dark currants, plums, tobacco leaf, and truffle earth, it hits the palate with full-bodied richness, a layered, seamless mouthfeel, and a great finish. The higher Merlot content here really shows in its overall sexy, supple, seamless style, and while this already offers pleasure, it's going to be one for the ages as well.”

- Jeb Dunnuck

Reviews *“Pronounced new wood. Vanilla and sweet cherry. Slightly floral. Wild cherry. Excellent fresh fruit. The palate has a silky texture, ultra-finely-knit tannin, vivid alcohol, medium-bodied intensity, increased acidity on the finish with slightly greenish components. Perfectly integrated finely-knit tannin and a creamy texture.”*
- PM, Falstaff Magazine

“On the nose, fruity, elegant, aromatic, precise and offers delicacy, concentration, complexity, delicate freshness, richness (but well-balanced, slightly tight/offering a rather contained richness). It reveals notes of bright blackberry, fresh/juicy blackcurrant and subtle notes of pulpy strawberry combined with hints of violet, lily/iris as well as touches of tonka bean, fresh flowers, a nice element of gravel, pulpy/chunky berries, hints of camphor, tea, an imperceptible hint of saffron, sweet spices and pepper (in the background). On the palate, nicely juicy/fresh, well balanced, frank (in the attack), dynamic and offers a nice roundness, a nice structure, density/fattiness but freshness, depth, carried precision/fine structure. The wine expresses notes of pulpy/fresh blackcurrant, fleshy/fresh blackberries and subtle notes of pulpy raspberry associated with small touches of blueberry, lily, graphite/wet stone, cardamom, a nice touch of gravel as well as hints of pulpy/fresh/acidic blueberries, delicate floral hints, discreet hints of fresh hazelnut, tonka bean, a subtle hint of cardamom, black tea, an imperceptible hint of roasted hazelnut, bergamot, and mocha. Good length. The tannins are massive, elegant, smooth, and relatively polished. Good length and palatability. A small hint of pleasant bitterness on the finish.”
- Vert de Vin

“Ripe and pure, dark chocolate, mint, ripe black currant, no noticeable oak. Very supple palate yet dense and concentrated with powdery tannin, almost a creamy texture intense long and lingering dark fruit flavours with some bay leaf and grassy notes, very stylish and finely tuned with great length.”
- AL, Tasted.com

*“(60% CS, 32% M, 4% CF, 4% PV; 13–13.5% ABV; 50% new, one third in cement “amphorae”)
Dense, crisply ripe black fruit and mineral infusion; rich and ample, fresh and very fine in firm tannin, an impression of a particularly complete PC; deep, plush yet contained, generous and fleshy yet fresh, with a lovely defining and enriching tannin texture and presence; dark black-fruit ripe and red-fruit fresh Cabernet flavor, long and close-grained, very mineral, complex, compact, complete. A most successful Pontet-Canet, maybe the best yet? 2030–50+.”*
- MS, The World of Fine Wine
