



## Thierry Germain / Domaine des Roches Neuves

You learn a lot about a man by his compost pile. One of the few producers in the appellation of Saumur-Champigny to farm naturally, Thierry Germain is extremely proud of his, reaching into the heart of his compost to show off the smoking debris to visitors. While others are pumping as much synthetic fertilizer into their vineyard as possible to reach the highest potential yields, Thierry Germain is going the other direction, using his compost only when necessary, and asking the vines to suffer to produce much, much less fruit. The end results are stunning.



Originally trained in Bordeaux, Thierry brings his sensibility to the noble Cabernet Franc grape to what is arguably some of the most suitable terroir for it in the world, the Saumur-Champigny appellation in the central Loire valley. The special combination of clay, limestone, flint, and alluvial soils helps to produce wines with power and elegance at the same time. When cropped at low levels, these vines produce Cabernet Franc with wonderful purity, length and precision which can age for decades.

Domaine des Roches Neuves has become a benchmark producer from this tiny winemaking region, harvesting completely by hand in over 30 parcels, all of which are vinified separately. While yields of most properties average upwards of 60 hectoliters per hectare, Roches Neuves averages just shy of 30, with some bottlings as low as 15. The difference in flavor, color, ageability, and complexity is enormous. By farming biodynamically and using only limited amount of natural fertilizers, Thierry is able to “manage” what are, in essence, “wild” vines which produce miniscule amounts of fruit. One can easily see the difference in the clusters as well as the leaves. On this page, there is a photo of two leaves which demonstrates this clearly. They were both taken from Cabernet Franc vines less than 10 feet apart, on the same day, from vines the same age. The leaf on the left is from Thierry’s “wild” vines and the leaf on the right is from a chemically-farmed vineyard. You will notice that the leaf on the right is much darker and larger, owing to the fact that the plant is using so much of its energy to make more of everything (grapes, stems, leaves, water, etc).



### **Domaine des Roches Neuves Saumur-Champigny**

Hand-harvested Cabernet Franc (100%) from 25+ year old vines. All indigenous yeast. Aged only in tank for 7 months.

### **Domaine des Roches Neuves Saumur-Champigny “Terres Chaudes”**

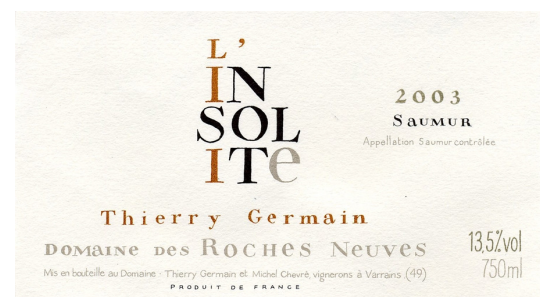
A low-yield bottling of pure Cabernet Franc, this wine is fermented in large oak casks before ageing for 12-14 months in 1 year old French oak from the previous year’s Marginale.

### **Domaine des Roches Neuves Saumur-Champigny “Marginale”**

One of the grand Cabernet Franc wines found anywhere in the world, this bottling is produced from miniscule yields (as low as 15 hl/ha) from very old vines. The triage is aggressive and the wine ages for 18 months in new French oak before release.

### **Domaine des Roches Neuves Saumur Blanc “Insolite”**

Pristine Chenin Blanc (100%) for a single parcel of 80 year old vines. Fermented in oval Austrian wooden tanks. Aged for 12 months in 1, 2, and 3 year old oak barrels. Benchmark Chenin.





### **Thierry Germain Saumur-Champigny**

Hand-harvested Cabernet Franc (100%) from 25+ year old vines in and around the village of Varrains. All indigenous yeast. Aged only in tank for 7 months.

### **Thierry Germain Saumur Blanc “Soliterre”**

Hand-harvested Chenin Blanc (100%) from older vines in and around the village of Varrains. All indigenous yeast. Aged in tank and in barrel for 12 months.

### **About Saumur-Champigny**

Situated on the left bank of the Loire, between Angers and Tours, Saumur is a historic city dominated by one of the most famous castles in France. The castle, like many of the great Châteaux of the Loire Valley, is built with the same tuffeau limestone that underlies the great vineyards of the region. Tuffeau is easy to carve, making it the stone of choice for medieval castles and cathedrals.

White Saumur (like the sparkling wines) is primarily Chenin Blanc, and in some cases, is only this varietal. Red Saumur is mainly made from Cabernet Franc. Saumur Champigny, a separate appellation makes rich red wines from one of the most famous terroirs for Cabernet Franc in the world. The chalk here is quite deep and the hillsides are such that the vines see wonderful exposition. Cabernet Franc may be blended with Cabernet Sauvignon or Pineau d'Aunis, a grape unique to the Loire Valley.

One of the most famous terroirs in Saumur-Champigny is in Varrains, a village just southeast of Saumur. Domaine des Roches Neuves is based here and like many of the wineries in the area, carved its cave underneath the vines. While some parcels include clay and gravel, these are primarily reserved for white varietals to make either still or sparkling wine.