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Domaines des Roches Neuves 2013 Saumur Blanc Clos de l'Echelier

Saumur, Loire

White wine from France

Drinking window:

Pale yellow. Shy, pure nose displays fresh pear, vineyard peach and lemon blossom, plus a touch of honey and a smoky nuance. Full-bodied and powerfully juicy, with a nicely integrated hint of residual sugar held in check by the refreshing crispness. Clean, warm and enormously deep, with exotic papaya and subtle spices lingering on the long finish. This enclosed plot in Dampierre overlooking the Loire has only belonged to the estate for a few years, but the vines for this chenin blanc are 60 year old. Only about 1,200 bottles are made in a normal year.

Joel B. Payne, December 2014

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From Focus on Loire Valley Chenin Blanc (Dec 2014)

Domaines Des Roches Neuves

When Thierry Germain left Bordeaux (his family owned Château Yon-Figeac in Saint Emilion) in 1982 at the age of 23, few would ever have imagined that this estate in Saumur would become one of the great success stories of the Loire. That said, its signature style has gone through several stages of metamorphosis over the years, as rich and voluptuous have slowly given way to pure, linear and crystalline. Germain now claims that he only enjoys drinking those wines that he has made over the past four vintages. With some vitriol, he speaks today of his antipathy for “body-builder wines,” those produced by recipe in an overripe, overoaked and overblown fashion.

Humorously, only yesterday he made them. Nonetheless, his comment that “modern enology has killed peasant culture and robbed our soils of their identity” is one often voiced by many of

his biodynamic brothers-in-arms and merits closer attention. He began moving down the biodynamic road some 15 years ago after an encounter with Lalou Bize-Leroy. By 2002 the estate was certified organic. Since purchasing it in 2012, he has changed the boundaries again, establishing a nursery to permit massale plantings, reintroducing the horse into his vineyards, and rolling the shoots back into the canopy rather than hedge them in order to create a better internal balance in the vine. Beyond his vinous talents, Germain is also a gifted storyteller. I particularly enjoyed the one about how his biodynamic mentor, François Bouchet, asked him to take a chair into the vineyard at sunrise and sit there for four hours. Why? To learn to understand the movement of the leaves as they track the course of the sun, protecting the grapes from over-exposure. With 28 hectares this is no small estate, but only about 15% of the 120,000 bottles that he produces are white. Even that is rather new. It was only a few years ago that he was able to buy the vineyards that now make two of his three offerings: the Clos Romans, which he replanted in 2007, and the Clos de l'Echelier. Frost in 2013 and hail in 2012 had a serious impact on production, but he was fortunate to have back stocks from previous vintages to avoid a financial meltdown so shortly after acquiring the property. Interestingly, though, while some of his neighbors made no single-site bottlings in 2013, Germain is a great advocate of the vintage. "It was one of the warmest years on record for us," he explains. "I think these are some of the greatest wines I've ever made." The chenin blancs from the vintage speak for themselves.

Grape Variety

Chenin Blanc

Release price

\$85.00

Winery/Importer Contact Info

V.O.S. Selections, Paul M. Young Fine Wines