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A Winemaker Woos the Bachelorette

Plus, Moët plants roots in China, babes in wineland and an obscenely extravagant wine box (it's ok—it's for charity)

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• We love it when wine and pop culture intersect—after all, spotting bottles of wine we recognize on *Cougar Town* is one of our favorite pastimes (bonus points to those who noticed Orin Swift's *The Prisoner* and Kosta Browne along with us on recent episodes). So imagine our delight when another of our guiltiest pleasures, ABC's *The Bachelorette*, has a Sonoma winemaker as one of the men trying to win **Ashley Hebert's** heart. **Benjamin Flajnik** (or "Ben F." as he's known on the show) is the 28-year-old co-owner of Evolve Winery in Sonoma, along with partner **Michael Benziger**. On the first episode, Flajnik came out of the limo with a bottle of his wine, the Evolve Sauvignon Blanc Sonoma Valley 2010. Unfiltered thinks it was a pretty slick move, as we've tried the wine ourselves and found it wonderfully juicy and intense, with plenty of bright citrus flavors. Hebert also liked the wine (and the winemaker); he was handed one of the coveted roses at the end of this week's episode (as were about a dozen other guys). We spoke with Flajnik, who couldn't comment on the details about the show, but did let us know that the wine has been well-received, and he's working on a value line of wines under the Evolve name. Currently, Evolve has three different wines made from purchased grapes in Sonoma and Napa, focusing on vineyards that are grown sustainably, organically or biodynamically. "I love the lifestyle," Flajnik said of being a winemaker. "I love that it's an art, and that it's an expression of us." Well, we love a passionate winemaker, so it's going to be easy to continue to root for him both in wine and in romance.

• Will it be strange to us, in 50 years' time, when most people in the world think of Domaines Baron de Rothschild and LVMH as Chinese companies? DBR, the premium prime mover in that newly wine-ravenous country, with Lafite, put roots in the ground in the Middle Kingdom two years ago to court China's significant, um, locavore tastes. Now LVMH has followed suit, snapping up 163 acres in Ningxia, a northerly province where agribusiness today mostly centers on the beloved wolfberry. But with a climate like Champagne's and a river, the Yellow, that boasts almost as many cigarette butts as the Marne, Ningxia could soon be a bubbly hub for the country's fledgling industry. Moët will send its full expertise to the new venture, and the *méthode Champenoise* as well. The Ningxia project is Moët's second in Asia: The Champagne house's Nashik Chandon sparklers made in India are already fizzing away in cellars for release next year.

• Wine world power couple **Gina Gallo**, granddaughter of E & J Gallo cofounder **Julio Gallo**, and **Jean-Charles Boisset** welcomed two new additions to the family Sunday May 26. The twin girls are the first children for the couple, who married in September 2009, which naturally sent the wine gossip world into a tizzy. While Gina Gallo's third-generation status is more than enough to qualify her for American wine royalty,



Courtesy of Evolve Winery

*You'll have to keep watching *The Bachelorette* to find out if Sonoma's winemaking suitor has a love potion cuvée on his hands.*

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she has also been a public face of the Gallo company. Boisset holds the title of president of Boisset Family Estates, which maintains a growing presence in California with the purchase of Russian River Valley star DeLoach in 2003 and the acquisition this month of California's generally recognized original winery, Buena Vista. With so much to celebrate, Unfiltered asked Boisset how he was feeling. "Excited!" he exclaimed, "Excited to be surrounded by the queens of the world!" The newborns have yet to be named—Boisset compared the task to getting to know a wine before giving it a label—but Unfiltered has it on very good authority that Dr. Seussian twin monikers Thing 1 and Thing 2 are not on the list of potential candidates.



• To celebrate the 75th anniversary of Domaine Clarence Dillon acquiring the first-growth Château Haut-Brion, **Prince Robert de Luxembourg**, great-grandson of **M. Clarence Dillon** and current president of the domaine and château, has brought together three passions: art, philanthropy and the wines of Haut-Brion. To do this, Prince Robert commissioned 20 hand-crafted wood consoles (15 for red wines, five for whites), made by Linley Bespoke Furniture Designers, 11 of which have been earmarked for sale in charity auctions around the world. Hidden drawers in the consoles hold silver-inlaid objects inspired by vines and grape leaves, designed by Italian jeweler Buccelatti. Each console will hold eight select vintages from the château, dating back to 1935. How much does such a console go for? On May 19, at the Cinema Against AIDS Gala during the Cannes Film Festival, one red wine console fetched nearly \$250,000 for amfAR (the Foundation for AIDS Research). We presume you missed out on that one, but don't fret: The remaining auctions will take place over the next two years in France, England, America, China, Japan and Russia. Charities to benefit from these auctions are in the fields of health, education and childhood development and are currently being handpicked by Prince Robert. The remaining consoles will be sold privately at a later date. Along with the wine-filled consoles comes a mixed case of 2010 Haut-Brion red and white, and a second wooden storage cabinet containing a monogrammed set of 12 glasses and two carafes. Buyer beware, however: You'll need to pick a chilly wing of your villa, palace or castle for the console—it isn't temperature-controlled.

The sales tax on a few of these should solve any lingering Eurozone budget problems.

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