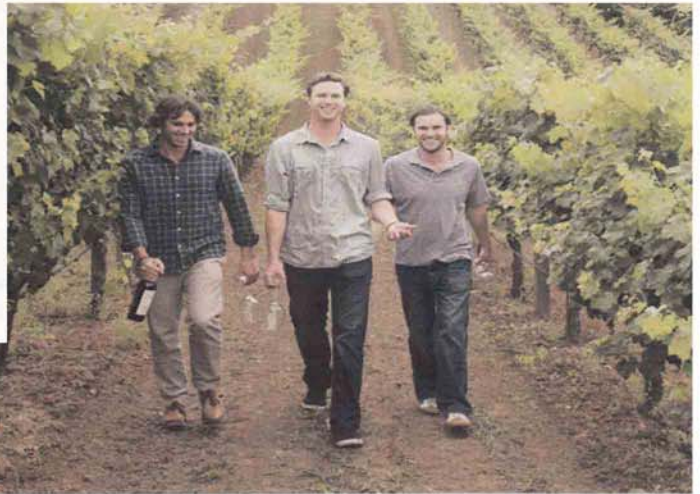


Serious Eats: Drinks

Does Ben the Bachelor's Wine Deserve a Rose?

Posted by Maggie Hoffman, January 18, 2012



That's my man on the left, with Michael Benziger center and Danny Fay on the right. [Photo: Tony Moll]

I've seen every season of the Bachelor, from the first limo filled with squealing girls to the last sponsored diamond ring. But this year, I'm watching the show for all the right reasons. Because I think I could really see myself falling for Ben. We're, you know, on a journey, and I know the process works. I'm not here to make friends. So what's-her-butt can just back off.

Why am I so sure of this connection, when we've only known each other, well, a minute or two less than he's known the other 16 girls he's dating? Because Ben The Bachelor, as you may or may not know, is a winemaker.

He started the winery a few years back with childhood friend Michael Benziger. (You may have [heard that name before](#).) At first it was called Evolve Winery, but Ben [told Wine Enthusiast](#) that he wanted to distance the brand from the name he'd used for it on The Bachelorette "and make sure people take us seriously." So the name was changed to Envolve Winery. Why the added letter? "We added an 'n' because of our commitment to nature," he said. Dreamy, right?

TV stunt aside, the Bachelor and his buddies seem quite serious about winemaking. They've been studying biodynamics and working with native yeast fermentation, and are moving toward sourcing most of their grapes from organic and biodynamic vineyards. (The group now includes Danny Fay, whose wine MBA thesis compared biodynamic and organic farming methods.)

Of course, even if I could fall in love and get engaged in a single 6-week television season, I could never marry a winemaker if I hated his wines. So it's time to put Ben to the ultimate test: we got a review sample of a white and a red, turned off the TV, and set to tasting. (Yes, my husband joined me in this effort. Guess he didn't feel too threatened.)



The Chard

Sniff the Envolve Carneros Chardonnay 2010 and you'll pick up a little butter and vanilla—if that doesn't get you excited, don't worry, this rich and creamy wine has quite a bit of fresh acidity to balance it. The tartness is a bit like green mangoes and unripe pineapple, and it keeps each sip fresh and bright, despite the richness and presence of creamy almond and cedar flavor. (This wine went through malolactic fermentation, and was aged for 10 months in 20% new French oak and remainder in stainless steel.) It has an herbal side, as if it had fermented with fresh tarragon and mustard seeds. The tanginess will work well with grilled bacon-wrapped scallops or grilled chicken (baste it with a little mustard mixed with lemon juice, and let it char a bit.) Oaky chardonnay isn't usually my favorite thing, but this is a well-made and balanced example of the style. It sells for around \$25.

Should you buy it?

If you generally like silky, rich white wines, you'll enjoy this. Price-wise, it's similar to Robert Mondavi's entry level wines, but much less than the reserve line.

The Cab

The Envolve 2008 Sonoma Valley Cabernet Sauvignon is smooth and full of fruit and black pepper—we somehow knew that bashful Ben wouldn't be making a burly brick-and-gamey-meat Cab. This \$40 wine has a juicy baked blackberry thing going on, like a luscious berry pie that's dusted with earth, plus plump black cherries coated in chocolate. (My husband said he wished it didn't remind him of cherry cough drops, but I think he was just jealous.) The Cabernet hinted at something floral, too—could it be? Roses? While I wish this wine were a touch earthier, and it's not as hauntingly multifaceted as our favorite Cabernets, I'd happily drink Ben's bottling, especially with rare lamb chops or seared duck breasts. No hot tub required.

Should you buy it?

The sky's the limit for prices on California Cabernet, and this quite-tasty bottle certainly isn't the highest end. But is it worth the money? If you like your reds a bit fruity, then you'll like this wine for its cherry-chocolate side. If you are more into powerfully savory wines or subtle earth and herbs, save your dollars for something else.

About the Author: Maggie Hoffman is the editor of [Serious Eats: Drinks](#). You can follow her on Twitter [@maggiejane](#).