

Grapes

Grapes are an old world fruit and have thus been used in Europe and the middle east since time immemorial. Cultivated by the Greeks, Romans and Egyptians their use in the production of wine has a long and rich history. Indeed in Soviet Georgia, archaeologists found a clay fermentation jar, or kwevri, decorated with bunches of grapes dated as early as 6000BC. Wine has long been heralded as a health tonic and was revered for its strengthening properties by most of the ancients. In his history of the Gallic wars, Caesar tells of the obligation of every soldier in the field to drink his measure of wine to preserve good health and bodily resistance to dysentery. It is thought that due to the uncertain nature of natural water contamination wine was actually seen as a safer drink than water when travelling abroad.

As a medicine in its own right, unfermented, the whole Grape really only becomes popular with Western Herbalists in the twentieth century. This happened in the 1920s, when Johanna Brandt of South Africa said she cured her stomach cancer with what she called The Grape Cure. A few years later, she wrote a book revealing the specifics of the natural method she used on her body. Brandt wrote: "The grape is highly antiseptic and a powerful solvent of inorganic matter deposits, fatty degeneration, morbid and malignant growths. It acts as a drastic eliminator of evil while building new tissue." She claimed that "abnormal growths, cancers, tumors, ulcers, abscesses and fibrous masses seem to be dissolved by the powerful chemical agent in the grape and that "the secret of the Grape Cure in wasting diseases is to be found in the rich proteid supplied by the grape," that grapes are "the most magnetic food," and that every tendril of the grape is "a living receiver of cosmic magnetism." Since publishing 'The Grape Cure' many naturopaths have since followed suit in using the Grape as a radiocal detoxifying agent and as a treatment for cancer in particular. A Grape Seed extract has also become available as a medicinal herb used primarily for it's high proanthocyanidin content (OPCs). Found in red wines, OPCs are flavonoid-rich compounds with very potent antioxidant properties. OPCs help maintain capillary strength, and have been found to inhibit the production of free radicals, and to affect enzyme systems that control inflammation. Brandts method originally consisted of five phases: Fasting for two or three days, during which only cold water is consumed. A daily enema is also given. After the fast, a diet of only grapes is followed for one to two weeks. One to three ounces of grapes are consumed every two hours during the day (seven meals a day). Water could be consumed as needed. Fresh fruits, tomatoes, and sour milk or cottage cheese are then added to the diet. A variety of raw foods are then introduced. A mixed diet is begun. This consists of one kind of fruit each day for breakfast, a cooked lunch, and a salad for supper.

Respected cancer researcher Ralph Moss wrote enthusiastically about The Grape Cure in the Spring, 1997, issue of his Media Watch. Furthermore, The Boston Globe reprinted a Reuters dispatch that raises high hopes about grapes. Red grape skins, it states, contain a substance called resveratrol. According to a well-known researcher, Dr. John Pezzuto of the University of Illinois at Chicago, this naturally occurring phenol "has multiple modes of action, inhibiting cancer growth at a lot of different stages, which is unusual." These stages are initiation of DNA damage, transformation of the cell into cancer, and growth and spread of the tumor.

In regards to the use of red wine as a medicinal agent many studies have suggested a positive influence of 'moderate' use, with moderate use being as little as $\frac{1}{4}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$ glass a day. Not everyone agrees however, as Dr. Mercola says: 'While red wine may appear to provide some great health benefits, I do not advise drinking it at all, as I am convinced that the alcohol itself is actually a poison and will unbalance your hormones. Also, drinking two or more glasses may offset the benefit and actually increase your risk of certain cancers. So if you absolutely insist on drinking red wine, check on the growing conditions of the grapes used and how the wine is made. Additionally, if the wine isn't made with organic grapes, it may not contain resveratrol, which rules out the benefits you seek.'

So whether or not you drink wine, eat plenty of fresh grapes, and as with everything else always buy organic!

- The Barefoot Doctor