

the fountain of youth

Vino

FROM THE FARM TO THE MESSAGE TABLE, VINO THERAPY IS INFLUENCING THE PROFIT POWER OF THE GRAPE

WRITTEN BY: **JENNY ADAMS**

Rather than searching in present day Florida for the Fountain of Youth, Ponce De León would have been smart to save the effort and look to the vineyards of his native Spain. For years, research has lauded the health benefits of moderate red wine consumption. Recently, however, the grapeseed has found employment as an anti-aging component in spa products and treatments.



grapeSeed

The roots of grape-based treatments extend back to France, specifically to arguably the world's most famous "vinothérapie" spa, The Caudalie Vinotherapie Spa located just outside of Bordeaux. The trend known as "vinotherapy," in this country has found legs of it's own and a respectable place at the American table — the massage table that is. Spa patrons in major American markets are reaping the external beauty benefits, and secondary and tertiary market cities are incorporating both the products and services of vinotherapy now as well.



America's Influences on French Design

"It began in France, and they set the market there. But it has moved quickly to the USA," says Lydia Mondavi. "The Americans have really embraced vinotherapy, although the group at Caudalie was definitely the pioneer."

Lydia Mondavi, wife of Robert Mondavi Jr., was involved in the spa/cosmetics industry before meeting her husband, and just four years ago the pair began working on 29 Spa, which is Lydia's current line of spa products and services all centered around the benefits of the grape.

"I was using grapeseed extract before meeting my husband, but ironically, we now have tons of it in our backyard," she laughs. "Grapeseed extract has been researched for 26 years, and it is considered one of the most powerful antioxidants on the planet.

The polyphenols in red wine are most concentrated agents that fight against free radicals," Mondavi explains. "

Free radicals are everywhere – in the air we breathe, the stress and toxins in our bodies, the world around us – and they are the number one contributor to aging us."



VINOTHERAPY

totally Organic



While the Mondavi 29 Spa line of products incorporates the seed extract from red varieties such as Cabernet and Petite Sirah, there are other interested parties out there who believe in and utilize the power of the white grape. Specifically for Ken Heng, creator of the Olavie and Le Vin lines of products, it's the Chardonnay grape that holds the most anti-aging charm. "I personally would say, 'drink red for the heart, and use white for the skin,'" Heng muses, and with 50-percent growth this year alone, his products are finding favor in the marketplace. "This is really all established knowledge already," he says with regards to the anti-aging properties of wine. "We are not exactly trying to re-invent the wheel."

What is being invented in America for the first time – in both the white and red grape camps – is lines of cosmeceutical grade products spanning into makeup lines and treatment options – many of which are totally organic. The trend of vinotherapy holds several outcomes of possibility for vintners. For example, in the Mondavi line, they are using the entire grape at this point to first produce wine, followed by the subsequent skin care products from the seed extractions.

"We are supporting something eco-friendly and green in vinotherapy," Mondavi says, "because we now use all of the grape."

Some of the Mondavi fruit will serve a dual purpose to make both wine and skin care products, and in addition Lydia Mondavi has partnerships in both Italy and other vineyards in California for the rest of the 29 Spa line. Italian grapes are employed for the new color cosmetic lines, and she sources other additives such as vitamin C, vitamin E, and a wide range of all-natural botanicals. These partnerships are creating profit for everyone involved.



A Major Marketability

On the horizon, many involved in the wine and/or spa business see lofty potential for cross promotion and overall expansion in regards to vinotherapy.

Diane Hanson, founder of Delluva Day Spa in New York City, has devoted her entire menu of services and treatments to the benefits of grapeseed extract.

“There were less than five spas in America four years ago doing anything like this,” she admits. “You saw vinotherapy lines more often in wine regions where people were adding one or two treatments to a traditional spa approach. There was not really one spa focused on it here. Four years ago there were also only one or two product lines available. Now here are probably a dozen.”

Hanson imports her products from South Africa, specifically the Theravine line, which utilizes both red and white grapeseeds. The red Pinotage from South Africa actually provides some of the highest antioxidant levels.

“I have to say that the vinotherapy lines that came out initially were basic cleansers and body lotions,” Hanson says. “They have really gone now into high-end skin care, and products that can compete with the best in the world. Vinotherapy has moved from a trend into something that the spa and wine industry are taking seriously.”

In her spa boutique, customers can purchase Reidel glassware. They can also participate in guided wine tastings by local sommeliers. Hanson features lesser-known labels at the tastings to help out her community of wine distributors, and each month her relaxation room sponsors a brand to be offered by the glass gratis to spa guests.

This fall 2008, the Mondavi’s will launch the world’s first eco-friendly natural cosmetic line in Neiman Marcus stores across America, and the family will host the second annual “Crush for Beauty Party.” The event is held at the California estate with seasonal treatments offered and a true farm-to-table setting that, while once reserved for organic food, is now reaching the spa experience.

“The trend is definitely from harvest-to-the-table in our spa and skincare line,” Lydia Mondavi says. “I think that in the future we will see some various things taking place from the wine side in combining natural foods and vinotherapy. It is becoming understood that not only is wine healthy internally, but externally as well.”



Wine’s reach is indeed pervasive. More so than many would have dreamed a decade ago. It remains to be seen if wineries will begin offering spa treatments or if spas will begin to carry their own labels, but it is undeniable that both are a distinct possibility in the decade to come.