

Head: Let Them Have Wine (And Bathe In It)

Subhead: Your favorite pinot noir not only makes juicy steaks or delectable *tapas* tastier, it can also make your skin as soft and smooth as fresh, unpicked grapes
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Since the days when mythical gods and royalties would mingle among mere mortals, one's position in society can be well defined by the regimen he keeps—a fact that rings true 'til today.

Man has created all these superfluous treatments in the name of pampering and defying aging. Take, for instance, the numerous specialized baths being offered in spas: chocolate baths in the Swiss Alps, beer baths in Germany, tea baths from the Orient. If we prod further, we're pretty sure to find hundreds of baths we've yet to hear of.

For the *crème de la crème*, however, there's one supreme treatment to dig into. From the postcard settings of France's Provençal region to the highlands of South America, vinotherapy is what the rich and famous crave for.

Vinotherapy, or wine therapy, is relatively new. While historians have long believed that bathing in wine is one of Cleopatra's beauty secrets, the technique has only been perfected a decade ago. Simply put, this beauty process uses the residue of wine making (the seeds and pulp of grapes) into an exquisite body rub. And while spa guests enjoy their goblet of cabernet sauvignon, they better absorb its anti-oxidant benefits by bathing in it.

Grapes have long been known to possess anti-aging properties for its polyphenols, chemicals which are found in the seeds. Perfecting the product would open the door to a whole new range of skincare regimen. It started in 1999, when husband and wife team, Mathilde Cathiard-Thomas and Bertrand Thomas, opened the first wine spa in Bordeaux—the Les Sources de Caudalie.

The discovery began much earlier in 1993, when Thomas sought the help of a professor from the Faculty of Pharmaceutics at Bordeaux University on the estate of the Château Smith Haut Lafitte. They found that polyphenols found in discarded grape seeds have an incredible capacity to fight free radicals, and therefore, curb aging. The free-radical protection from grape seed polyphenols is unequalled in the plant world. With a stabilized grape-seed polyphenol patent and their experience in wine making, Caudalie was born.

Caudalie Vinotherapie Spas remains the most exclusive of wine spas, but throughout the Europe's wine region, and in Chile and Argentina, the wine spa industry began to flourish. Where else can you sip your wine and adore the moonlight while soaked in a relaxing wine pool? Only in these retreats. Complete with your own personal butler, you have the luxury of imagining yourself an empress with an entire household, nay kingdom, at your command. Well, the wine spirits can do that to you in a way.

Wine spa treatments vary—each establishment would certainly concoct their signature service to try and distinguish it from the rest. Some of the standard services may include Champagne facials and wine massages; the Santé Winelands Wellness Center in South Africa has the shiraz or chardonnay cocoon wraps; some have face masks with vineyard flowers or grape pulps; still some will let you submerge in a wine barrel.

Along with the treatments are the beauty products made from the grape essence. Grape seed products are rich in vitamins C and E. Among the advantages are skin rejuvenation, toning and

strengthening, wrinkle prevention, regeneration of dead cells, detoxification and improved blood circulation. As added value, spa goers are also treated to other grape-related activities like the stomping festival at the end of the harvest. Of course, why not complete the whole grape experience by availing of the “detoxifying” grape-only diet during your stay.

It was reported that Hollywood has taken into wine therapy as well, and quite expected. Names like Madonna, Eva Longoria, and Sarah Jessica Parker have been dropped here and there. This kind of publicity will surely increase the interest, and more likely hike up the rates.

A single treatment would cost around 150-200 Euros. In the US Napa Valley, wine spas charge around \$150 for a 60-minute treatment session. This, of course, depends on the service you're getting. An entire week of retreat and package, as celebrities and heiresses do, will cost a small fortune. The amount may not sound über excessive, especially if they have the money to dispose. However, it's the entire concept that makes it so lavish. It takes our adoration for wine to a whole new level. And it's no longer enough just to drink them.