

Traveling with Jewish Taste[®]

Grapes on the Move

By Carol Goodman Kaufman



"But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of the Lord of hosts hath spoken it." [Micah 4:4]

This picture – enjoying a soft summer breeze shaded by the branches of a tree heavily laden with plump and luscious figs, and with sweet and juicy grapes within arm's reach, is the very evocation of peace. And, it is just one of many Biblical references to the grape vine.

In fact, no plant is mentioned more in the Tanach than the grape and its products, and the vine and its fruit are used metaphorically throughout its teachings.

"A land flowing with milk and honey" may have been the first prediction of what would later become the homeland of the Jews, but the Torah gives another description.

When Moses sent twelve scouts to spy out the Promised Land, they brought back with them samples of the fruit grown there, so weighty that it took two men to carry it on a pole. This iconic image of plenty appears on artifacts ancient and modern, from coins to postage stamps.

The history of the grape is as old as the history of humankind, with hunter-gatherers probably the first to enjoy this wild fruit of the vine.

The climbing shrub probably originated in Mesopotamia as early as 6000 B.C.E. From there, the vinifera grape spread eastward to Phoenicia and Egypt, where they were pictured in hieroglyphics in ancient burial tombs.

By 2000 B.C.E., Phoenician sailors were carrying grapevines across the Mediterranean to Greece and beyond, with ancient Greek and Roman civilizations revering grapes for their use in winemaking.

Grapes didn't remain wild for long, becoming one of the earliest cultivated fruits on Earth. As agriculture became more sophisticated, so did the varieties of grapes and their uses. Soon there were "table" grapes grown for eating, "raisin" grapes for drying, and of course, the many varieties of "wine" grapes – all in a wide range of colors.

When pioneers settled in America in the early seventeenth century, they brought with them young shoots of grapevines, first attempting to plant in New Mexico and later finding California to be the most suitable region for grape cultivation.

California now produces all the raisins and about ninety percent of the wine made in America. New York, Michigan, and Washington also support significant grape production.

Although Israel has a long history of winemaking, the country does not have its own indigenous grape varieties. When the Ottomans controlled Palestine, they only permitted the planting of vineyards to produce "food" grapes, so many local grape varieties disappeared for hundreds of years.

The renewal of commercial winemaking in Israel came about in the years of the First Aliyah, from 1881 to 1903. Prior

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Many Israeli vineyards grow wine grapes today



Grapes from *The Promised Land*. It took two men to carry.

AUTUMN OR THE BUNCH OF GRAPES OF THE PROMISED LAND" (1664), NICOLAS POUSSIN, 1594-1665.

Stuffed Grape Leaves

These treats offer both sweet and savory tastes, and smooth and crunchy textures. No mushy, sticky rice in these beauties, they are guaranteed to garner raves from your guests.

Ingredients

| | |
|---|--|
| 6 tablespoons olive oil | 36 grape leaves, preferably wild (see instructions below for preparing fresh leaves) |
| 1 onion, chopped fine | 1/4 cup water |
| 2/3 cup your choice of rice mixture (I love white, brown, wild and red) | 1/4 cup fresh lemon juice |
| 1/2 teaspoon ground allspice | Fresh lemon wedges |
| 1-1/2 cups water | Chopped fresh parsley |
| 1/4 cup dried currants | |
| 1/4 cup pine nuts | |



Directions:

Heat two tablespoons oil in heavy medium saucepan over medium heat. Add onion and sauté until tender, about five minutes. Add rice and allspice and stir thirty seconds. Add 1-1/2 cups water and currants and bring to boil. Reduce heat to low, cover and simmer until water is absorbed and rice is tender, about twenty minutes. Remove from heat. Heat 1 tablespoon oil in heavy small skillet over medium-low heat. Add pine nuts and sauté until golden brown, about six minutes. Mix nut mixture into rice. Season with salt and pepper. Cover bottom of heavy large skillet or Dutch oven with about ten grape leaves, pressing about one inch up sides of skillet. Arrange one leaf, vein side up, on work surface. Place 1 rounded tablespoon rice filling near stem. Fold in sides, then roll up jelly roll fashion. Repeat with remaining filling and leaves. Arrange stuffed leaves, seam side down, close together in leaf-lined skillet. Drizzle 3 tablespoons oil over. Add 1/4 cup water and fresh lemon juice. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat to medium-low, cover and cook fifty minutes. Cool completely.

(Grape leaves can be made one day ahead. Cover and refrigerate.)

Arrange stuffed grape leaves on platter. Garnish with lemon and parsley.

Makes 36

Preparing Fresh Grape Leaves

You don't have to live next to a vineyard to have access to grape vines. They are growing wild all over Berkshire County and are at their best in late spring and early summer in this neck of the woods. Pick a lot and freeze those you don't need right away. Come winter you will be delighted to cook up a batch of stuffed grape leaves for a fond remembrance of the summer past.

Remember that grape leaves should have no holes, from vines that have not been sprayed with pesticides. They should be light green, and tender, best from the top of the plant. Leaves should be at least the size of the palm of your hand, large enough to wrap around a filling.

Bring them from the vine directly into the kitchen. Rinse well under cold running water and, using a sharp knife, remove the stems carefully.

Blanch the leaves by placing them in a large pot and cover with boiling water, letting them sit for four to five minutes. Drain them well and pat dry with paper towels (white only) to remove excess liquid.

You can use the leaves immediately or freeze for later use. To do so, lay one on top of the other and package fifty per plastic bag. Press to remove as much air as you can, close, and freeze flat. Label bags with date and number of leaves.

Sole Veronique

The term "Veronique" describes dishes garnished with seedless white grapes. This fish dish is easy, delicious, and perfect for company.

Ingredients:

| | |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 8 fillets of sole | 1 bay leaf |
| 1-1/2 cups dry white wine | 2 tablespoons of butter |
| 1 onion, sliced | 2 tablespoons of flour |
| 3/4 teaspoon freshly ground pepper | 1 cup milk |
| 3/4 teaspoon salt | Fresh parsley |

Directions:

Lay the sole fillets in a buttered dish and cover with wine.

Add sliced onion, the bay leaf, salt, and pepper.

Poach the fish for fifteen minutes at 300° F.

Peel the grapes.

Remove the fillets from the stock when cooked and reduce the liquid to a strong concentrated stock.

Melt the butter in a saucepan and stir in the flour, stirring in the milk and fish stock until the sauce is bubbling.

Check the seasoning and add the grapes.

Arrange the fish on a serving platter and spoon the sauce over the fish. Garnish with parsley.

Serves 4



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to that, home-based winemaking supplied kiddush wine for the religious Jewish community and Communion wine for Christians.

The Templars, Christian pilgrims from Germany, also planted vineyards using German grape varieties.

The first Jewish agricultural experience in viniculture was at the Mikveh Israel Agricultural School, established in 1870, but the Israeli wine industry got a huge boost from Baron Edmond de Rothschild.

On his first visit to Palestine in 1887, Rothschild decided to launch a serious wine growing enterprise, and hired Gerard Ermens, a renowned French agronomist, to supervise viniculture in Palestine for all the Rothschild sponsored communities.

Serious wine production then began in Rishon Le Zion, Zichron Ya'acov, Petach Tikvah, Rosh Pina, among other places.

In the last three decades, the range of both wine grape varieties and wineries in Israel has expanded dramatically – and Israeli wines have earned many awards.

Viniculture has become such an important part of the Israeli economy that the Meir Shefaya Youth Aliyah Village teaches it to its students, who manage every step of the wine producing and marketing process, from grape harvesting through label design.

Although commercial grape production dates back thousands of years, it was not until 1854 that Ephraim Wales Bull developed the Concord variety to withstand the cold New England winters and its rocky soil.

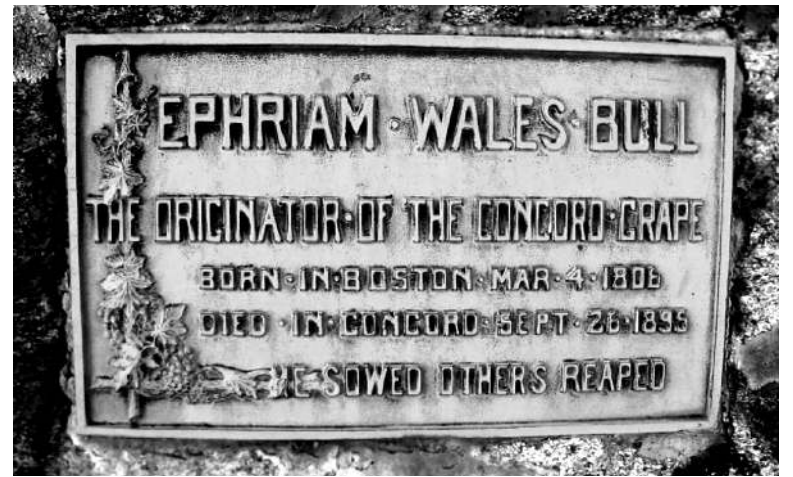
He named it after the Massachusetts village of Concord where it was grown. American Jews are familiar with this variety of grape not just through its use in grape jelly, but as the basis of sweet sacramental wine. Fortunately, with the development of the wine industry around the world, we are now able to enjoy delicious, award-winning wines without risking diabetes.

About a decade after Wales began selling his grape stock to growers, New Jersey dentist Dr. Thomas Welch began experimenting with the Concord grapes growing in his front yard.

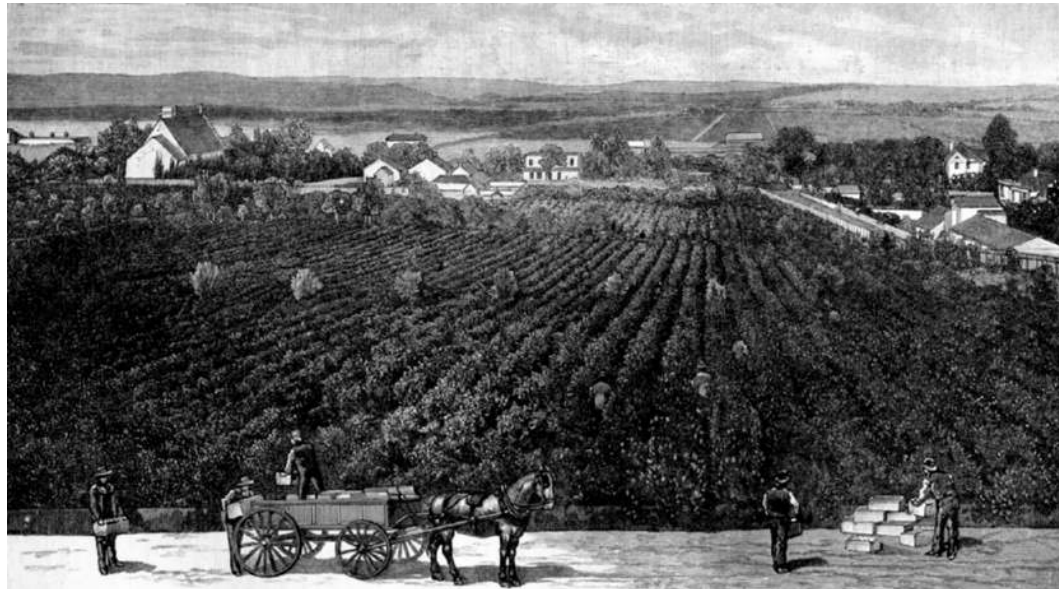
Studying Louis Pasteur's theory of organism killing heat, Welch developed his unfermented grape juice, still immensely



Bacchus, the ancient Roman God of Wine



Ephraim Wales Bull developed the Concord variety grape. His grave at Sleepy Hollow Cemetery, Concord, notes: "He sowed others reaped."



Scene of an early California vineyard at San Jose, Alameda County



When Alexander the Great besieged Thebes, stuffed grape leaves were born

popular today as Welch's Grape Juice.

What makes the grapevine unique among fruits is that every part of the plant can be used. Ancient Greek legend claims that the origin of stuffed grapes leaves goes back to the time when Alexander the Great besieged Thebes and food became so scarce that the Thebans cut what meat they had into little bits and rolled it in grape leaves.

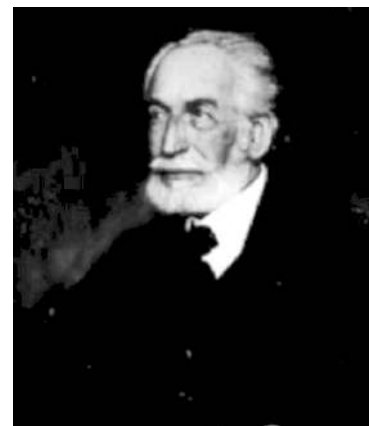
The stuffed grape leaves of Greece, also called "dolmades," are filled with minced lamb, rice, and herbs – such as mint, parsley, or dill.

When served as a main dish, the leaves are covered with an egg-lemon sauce. In Turkey and in Iran, their filling is usually more rice than meat, as well as pine nuts and currants.

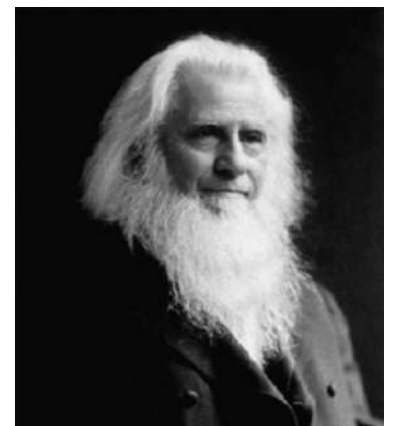
So, next time you pick up a bunch of grapes or sip a nice chilled glass of Chardonnay, you will be enjoying the results of millennia of labor.

Carol Goodman Kaufman, an organizational psychologist and writer, is the author of *Sins of Omission: The Jewish Community's Reaction to Domestic Violence* (Westview Press, 2003). She serves on the National Board of Hadassah and chairs the Jewish Community Relations Council of Central Massachusetts. Kaufman divides her time between Worcester, West Stockbridge, and the world.

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Baron Edmond de Rothschild, boasted the wine industry in Israel in 1887



Dr. Thomas Welch, the father of Welch's Grape Juice

Hadassah's Chai Tea

PITTSFIELD – From noon to 2 p.m. on Tuesday, July 26, the Berkshire Hills Chapter of Hadassah will hold its annual "Chai Tea" to benefit Young Judaea at the home of Julia Kaplan, 68 Colt Road.

Vocalist and cabaret performer Lisa Kantor, accompanied by Joe Rose, will present a musical program.

Young Judaea, the Zionist youth movement sponsored by Hadassah aims to build Jewish identity and to develop commitment to Israel and social action in American youth.

Young Judaea's year course in Israel for high school graduates offers an intimate experi-

ence of living in Israel, learning Hebrew, studying at Beit Ar-El Center located in a Youth Hostel, and volunteering on a wide range of projects from farming to assisting the ambulance corps.

Some colleges offer credit for courses taken during this year program. There are also Young Judaea summer camps and programs in the United States and in Israel for high school and college age students.

Members and guests are welcome to attend the "Chai Tea" at a cost of \$25; a light lunch will be served – members may bring dairy or parve dishes to share. For reservations and information please call Hope Hagler at (413) 637-4615 or email berkshirehillshadassah@gmail.com.

Knesset Israel's Gala

PITTSFIELD – At 4:30 p.m. on Sunday, August 21, Congregation Knesset Israel will hold its "Champagne Wishes, Caviar Dreams, Music Moments Gala" at the Country Club of Pittsfield, 639 South Street.

Presented by Barrington Stage Company's professional youth theatre, selections from "All Shook Up," a 1950s' song-and-dance extravaganza featuring the songs of Elvis Presley will highlight the entertainment; a fashion show of the designs of couturier Robin Lane will be featured; and a full dinner of delicious delights will be served.

The cost is \$136 per person via checks made out to Congregation Knesset Israel, 16 Colt Road, Pittsfield, MA 01201 or via VISA or MasterCard. For further information and reservations, please call (413) 445-4872.

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