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
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Grape Expectations

By Laurel Mills

Lifestyles Editor



Many consider grape seed a powerful anti-aging ingredient.

In December, fashion and beauty juggernaut Christian Dior premiered its high end skincare line, [L'Or de Vie](#), at Saks Fifth Avenue and Neiman Marcus stores throughout the country. Priced at \$320 for the face cream and \$350 for the extract, L'Or de Vie is publicized as one of the finest beauty products on the market. The secret? Sap from the saubignon grape vine.

Grape seed, often touted as one of the finest anti-aging agents, has been used in vinotherapy treatments in the Bordeaux region of France since the 1990s. In the past few years, these European secrets have found their way to California's Napa Valley and other spas dedicated to the latest in skin care innovation, as well as beauty and cosmetic stores across the country.

Big Spenders

For the latest in grape seed beauty, I headed to Nashville's [Trace Retreat Store and Spa](#) for a Vineyard body scrub (\$85). The treatment itself is designed to be slightly abrasive for the purpose of exfoliation. While I never found the body scrub painful, there were moments of discomfort that might bother those with sensitive skin. However, when she got to my back, I did enjoy knowing that the itch that had been hounding me for

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Bargain Hunters

[Sephora](#) offers a line of grape body products priced for the cost-conscious. Our testers liked the smell of the grape seed body scrub (\$12), body wash (\$8) and whipped body delights (\$8) much better on than they did when just sniffing the bottles. They also agreed that since the body scrub was more abrasive than other products and a bit difficult to wash off, it would make more sense for use on tough spots like elbows and heels rather than more sensitive skin. Of course, body butter tends to be a hit, especially in the dry-skin season of winter.

However, I have the sinking suspicion that Sephora's line is not designed to exploit the anti-oxidant power of grape seeds, but focuses more on color and smell with their choice of ingredients. These same products are also available in mango, pink grapefruit and a variety of other flavors. So, while the items do exfoliate and moisturize well, those looking for the real benefits of vinotherapy would be advised to look elsewhere.

A budget-friendly line that does make the most of the science behind grape seed use in cosmetics is [Merlot USA](#) out of El Paso, Texas. They offer a full array of products for the face and body, including a Merlot Night Cream and Anti-Wrinkle Cream. While it seems that the effects of the Merlot Cleanser (\$11) and Moisturizer (\$14) would be best observed after repeated, regular use, the Merlot Eye Cream (\$12) received high rating from all of our testers who immediately felt its firming effects.

After reading about vinotherapy, which group are you most likely to fall into?

- Big Spenders
- Middle of the Road
- Bargain Hunters

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