

# Grape arbors harbor lots of good memories

Many of my fondest memories involve grape arbors. There is no finer place to escape from the world than under a grape arbor.

There you can read a book, hold a romantic rendezvous, or just sit and daydream.

When I was a child in Northern Michigan, grape arbors were far more common than they are today. Almost every home had one. But later, as an adult, I was also fortunate to have a huge one in our back yard in Garden City.

There, my children played by the hour. Seven little boys who called themselves the "He-Man Women-Haters Club" used to meet there regularly. One of my daughters had her first real kiss under that secluded bower.

Over the years, imagination turned those twisted vines into thatched jungle huts, a desert tent, and a haunted forest trail, among other things.

Grapes are as old as mankind. They have been found in Swiss Lake dwellings dating back to the Bronze Age, as well as in the mummies' tombs of Egypt.

Grapes are mentioned throughout the Bible; the Book of Genesis tells us that Noah planted vineyards after the flood.

Seedless grapes, table grapes, raisin grapes, wine grapes, juice grapes and canning grapes, (more than 80 species in all), are native to the temperate zone of North America.

Because they are pleasing to the



kitchen witch

Gundella

eye, as well as to the palate, they have been used in countless forms of art and decoration.

Here in Michigan, the blue concord grape, and the sweet green or white grape are the two most common.

Everyone knows these make fantastic wines and jellies. But both wine and jelly are time-consuming things to make, and in our busy

world, a lot of grapes wither on the vine that might be enjoyed if people knew how really easy it can be to use them.

I make a very simple grape juice that takes very little work, and is not messy. You can make a pint or a tub full without measuring, and without any special equipment. Best of all, it's delicious and tastes like fresh grapes.

## EASY GRAPE JUICE

Wash grapes, and place them, skins, seeds, stems, and fill in a cooking pot.

Add just enough water to barely cover them, and heat to boiling point.

Reduce heat and simmer, uncovered, about 10 minutes.

Strain through a colander, and again through a wire sieve (looks like a large tea strainer).

Add a dash of salt, and sweeten to taste. Reheat just enough to dissolve sugar.

Bottle or freeze until ready to use.

## GRAPE SAUCE

(Good with beef, pork, chicken, or fish)

2 tablespoons butter or margarine

1 Knorr brand bouillon cube, chicken or beef (I use chicken with everything except beef or wild game)

1 cup grape juice, either purple or white.

Melt butter in pan over low heat.

Mix in the bouillon cube, and slowly add grape juice, stirring constantly.

## WHITE GRAPE SAUCE FOR DESSERTS

4 egg yolks

1/2 cup sugar

1 cup white grape juice

1 tablespoon butter or margarine

Beat egg yolks and sugar in the top of a double boiler until thick and light.

Add the grape juice, and place over boiling water. Cook, stirring constantly, until thickened. Stir in butter.

Serve hot or cold over crepes, fritters, cakes, or puddings.

Note: Do not substitute purple grape juice. It makes a tasty, but

very unattractive, sauce. Also, do not attempt to make this without a double boiler, for it scorches easily.

## GRAPE PIE

(This takes a little more work, but makes a delicious and unusual pie.)

5 cups blue Concord grapes

1 cup sugar

2 tablespoons cornstarch

1/2 teaspoon salt

1 tablespoon lemon juice

Discard the stems, and slip off the skins from the grapes, keeping them separate from the pulp.

Heat the juice and pulp for about five minutes. Push mixture through a sieve to remove seeds.

Combine the sugar, cornstarch and salt. Mix this with the grape pulp, and cook it about five minutes, stirring constantly.

Add the grapes (with their skins) with lemon juice.

Pour the filling into a pie pan lined with pastry. Criss-cross the top with strips of pastry, and bake in a hot oven for 30 minutes (the first 15 minutes at 450 degrees, and the remaining time at 350 degrees).

## GRAPE CHEESECAKE

1 can sweetened condensed milk

2 8 oz. pks. cream cheese

1/2 cup white grape juice

2 tablespoons lemon juice

Prepared graham cracker or cookie crust for one pie, or 15 individual-sized tart shells, or 45 miniature tart shells.

Beat together the first four ingredients until very smooth.

Fill pie shell, and bake at 350 degrees until firm about 15 minutes for the pie. (Less time is necessary for the tarts).

Garnish with fresh grapes, or with a dollop of melted grape jam.

# Ancient fruits are sweet as candy

Figs, dates, prunes and raisins, what do these fruits have in common? All are candy sweet, all can be dried, all can be eaten out-of-hand and all are referred to as "sweet treats from the Gods!" Whether you believe that or not, these international "four" have been around a long time and add a classy touch to snacks or meals.

Figs are at least 5,000 years old, one of the most ancient edible plants. The soft, plump succulent figs are produced by the ficus tree. Some of the original fig orchards were planted in California during the 1800s, and the ever popular fig bars were first sold in the United States nearly 100 years ago.

CHOOSE fresh figs that are soft and ripe as possible. If a fig is over-ripe it will have a sour odor. Store underripe figs at room temperature until ripe. After they are ripened they are highly perishable, use within one to two days.

Figs are high in dietary fiber, potassium, calcium, and low in sodium. The skin is edible, the inside flesh moist but they are also intensely sweet. Figs can be purple, green, yellow or white skinned depending on the variety.

Callimyrna (or Smyrna) are light brown or amber in color with seeds that have a nut-like flavor. The Mission variety is dark purple or black in color with very small seeds and thin skin. Kadota figs are yellow-green, thick skinned with very small seeds.

Dried figs are a delicious out-of-hand snack available year round. Mince figs and add sweetness and a chewy texture to cookies, cakes, breakfast cereals, yeast and quick breads, stuffings and steamed puddings. Dried or fresh figs can be used for breakfast, as an appetizer, added to salads, poached for compotes, baked, used for garnish or dipped in chocolate for a rich dessert.

Dates, are another ancient fruit that are as sweet as candy. Fresh dates have a thin golden skin, moist, sweet golden flesh and a small



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brown pit. Most dates eaten in America are grown in California now, but originally came from the Sahara Desert.

Look for plump, luscious dates with a rich golden brown color. Keep soft fresh dates in the refrigerator in a plastic bag and use within one week.

Most dates marketed here are in their dried state and available year round. Dried dates will keep indefinitely if wrapped airtight and refrigerated. Dates contain fiber, calcium, potassium, iron and other nutrients but are also very sweet so not necessarily low in calories.

DATES CAN be eaten out-of-hand as a snack or a dessert. To sweeten cakes, cookies, stuffings, breads, muffins, cereals, or salads add chopped dates. Dates make wonderful stuffed candy-like treats or stuffed in sausage and broiled for an appetizer. Place dates in the freezer for a couple hours before chopping, it makes chopping easier.

All prunes are plums but not all plums can be pruned! It takes special qualities to allow plums to dry into quality prunes. These special plum cuttings came from France to the United States around 1856. Now, more than two-thirds of the world's supply and 98 percent of all the prunes grown in the United States are from California. Prunes are small purplish black freestone plums high in sugar and firm, to dry successfully.

Prunes are filled with dietary fibers, vitamin A, potassium and iron and low in sodium. They can be eaten hot or cold, for breakfast or dessert. Add chopped pitted prunes to quick breads, muffins, pancakes, cookies, fillings and stuffings, for a

raisins. California now supplies about half the world's raisins. Most raisins are made from Thompson Seedless, Muscat, Black Corinth or Sultana.

GRAPES are convenient and a portable source of energy. They are also 70 percent fruit sugar, a source of iron and fiber, potassium, calcium, B vitamins and other nutrients.

Raisins add natural sweetness and flavor to cakes, cookies, stuffing, stews, breads, muffins, breakfast cereals, salads and desserts. If they do lose a little of their moisture, soak in warm water to soften or in brandy or fruit juice to flavor and soften.

For additional storage time freeze, raisins thaw very quickly and will be just as fresh tasting.

With renewed interest in fiber these famous "international four" are being rediscovered. Add them to meals or eat as snacks, sweet but nutritious.

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