

## Grape Facts and Lore Lead to Books for Those 4 - 94

### Did you know:

- Grapes are one of the oldest known cultivated crops.
  - Approximately 8000 years ago the grape variety *Vitis vinifera* was grown between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea, near northern Iran.
  - According to the Bible, Noah planted a vineyard.
  - Details for grape and wine production figured in the hieroglyphics of the 4th (2400 BC), 17th, and 18th dynasties of Egypt.
  - In Homer's time, wine was a regular commodity among the Greeks.
  - Grapes are mentioned in the oldest known language, Sumerian, dating back 5000 years.
  - The Phoenicians carried the grape into France about 600 BC
  - The Romans planted grapes in the Rhine Valley not later than the 2nd century AD.
  - Pliny the Elder described 91 varieties of grapes, distinguished 50 kinds of wines, and described vine-training methods.
  - Grapes moved into the Orient by way of India.
  - Native Americans were known to grow grapes 3800 years ago.
  - Spanish Friars began grape cultivation at missions in California around 1769.
- On average, it takes 600 grapes to produce a bottle of wine.
- One acre of grapes can produce an average of about 15,000 glasses of wine.
- There are more than 60 species and 8000 varieties of grapes.
- The average person eats 8 pounds of grapes a year.
- Ancient physicians prescribed raisins as potions that could cure everything from mushroom poisoning to old age.
- If left alone, a grape vine will spread fifty feet or more.
- In early Roman times, birch trees were planted near grape vines, so the vines would climb the tree, rather than spread on the ground.



While all of this is interesting, grapes and vineyards were just part of childhood for Svetlana Konnikova. Living in the country with her family of ten (which included both sets of grandparents), she remembers the hilly countryside with its sunny vineyards, fields of blossoming herbs and flowers, and big walnut trees everywhere. This was in a suburb of the Russian tsar's huge empire, former Bessarabia, now Moldova.

The basement was the most magical place. "There Grandpa stored wooden barrels filled with his home-made crystal clear white and rose wines," Konnikova recalls. "In another part of the basement, Grandma suspended from the ceiling handmade 'necklaces' made with dried fruits and herbs, or *Vitachella* with

— over —

nuts, which we called ‘grape sausage.’ My sister and I were allowed to go anytime to the basement, which we called our ‘Sweet Fairyland,’ to tear down and eat a grape ‘necklace.’”

Since grapes were such a memorable part of Konnikova’s childhood, it is no wonder that her first book is a fanciful children’s picture book. **Grapette, the Runaway Who Rolled Away** (\$15.95 hardcover, [www.babygrapette.com](http://www.babygrapette.com)) is a charming story—brightly illustrated by Anatoli Smishliaev. It is based on an ancient French folktale now set in a California vineyard. Readers follow Grapette, an inquisitive baby grape, as she learns the value of home and family after she runs away from her vine.

In Konnikova’s next book, **Mama’s Home Remedies** (scheduled for publication in January 2008, \$24.95 hardcover and \$19.95 paperback, [www.aurorapublishers.com](http://www.aurorapublishers.com)), she shares a different part of her colorful upbringing. This book is a kaleidoscopic tapestry woven of centuries-old herbal remedies, timeless techniques and concepts, intellectual rigor and joyfully recounted anecdotes and folk tales, women’s wisdom, family values and traditions, artistically rendered illustrations and an abundance of humor.

In **Mama’s Home Remedies**, Konnikova writes, “Grapes and vines are symbols of well-being, friendship and attachment. Like the pineapple, they are a symbol of welcome....My grandfather told me, ‘The grapevine will pass happiness along to you’ — and it has.”

Recent studies suggest that grapes may have healing qualities, a fact that Konnikova’s mother and grandmother recognized when they made home remedies for their neighbors and friends that included grapes. She hopes her books will be welcomed like the grape and bring happiness to many.

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To request a review copy of **Grapette** or early information about **Mama’s Home Remedies**, to arrange an interview with Ms. Konnikova, to receive art electronically, or for any additional information, please contact Kate Bandos at KSB Promotions:  
**800-304-3269** or 616-676-0758 • [kate@ksbpromotions.com](mailto:kate@ksbpromotions.com)

## **Grapette, The Runaway Who Rolled Away**

Retold by Svetlana Konnikova.

Illustrated by Anatoli Smishliaev

Full-color illustrations throughout

32 pages • 8.75" x 11.25" • For children ages 4 - 8

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