

Herbal wine, just the thing for ailing pharaohs

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This undated photo provided by University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology courtesy of the German Archaeological Institute in Cairo shows the inside of a wine vessel sherd that was buried with one of ancient Egypt's first rulers, Scorpion I, is shown. Herbs have been detected in wine from the tomb many centuries before the civilization's known use of herbal remedies in alcoholic beverages, according to a study published Monday in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences. (AP Photo/Courtesy of German Archaeological Institute in Cairo)

(AP) -- When great-grandma took a nip of the elderberry wine "for medicinal purposes," she was following a tradition that goes back thousands of years.

Indeed, researchers say they have found evidence that the Egyptians spiked their wine with medicinal herbs as long as 5,000 years ago.

A chemical analysis of pottery dating to 3150 B.C. shows that herbs and resins were added to grape wine, researchers led by Patrick E.

McGovern of the University of Pennsylvania Museum of [Archaeology](#) and [Anthropology](#) report in Tuesday's edition of Proceedings of the National Academy of Science.

Adding tree resin to wine to prevent disease was widely known in ancient times, also being reported in ancient China, and continuing into the Middle Ages, the researchers say.

And they note that Egyptian records report that a variety of herbs were mixed in wine, beer and other liquids for medical uses.

Chemicals recovered from the pottery indicate that in addition to [wine](#) there were savory, blue tansy and artemisia - a member of the wormwood family - present. Other chemicals indicate the possible presence of balm, senna, coriander, germander, mint, sage and thyme.

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