

INDIGENOUS



SPA PRODUCTS

writer **Rachel Oakes-Ash**

Local is the new black in the world of spa with indigenous elements forming the foundation for the latest trend in treatment products. Companies are returning to the geographical roots of their own backyard to find active ingredients that have been utilised throughout history to promote healthy radiance.

while the use of the earth's powerful minerals and plant life is not new, people have been slathering themselves in mud from the Dead Sea and the thermal pools of New Zealand's Rotorua for centuries, the combination of new science and ancient wisdom is now being packaged into indigenous face and body products designed to enhance the skin naturally.

Australian company, Li'Tya (www.litya.com) are leading the indigenous renaissance with a brand philosophy that promotes respect for indigenous bushland. Founded in 2000 by Gayle Heron, Li'Tya's products and signature spa treatments are based on ancient Aboriginal knowledge utilising native flora with a plant oil base and combining science with a minimal environment impact philosophy.

The Aboriginal 'Dreamtime' has existed for fifty thousand years and incorporates mind, body and soul in a form or state of meditative self healing. Li'Tya taps into an individual's own 'dreamtime' with spa products and treatments split between those 'of the sea' and those 'of the earth' and peppered with indigenous products found only in Australia such as calming lemon myrtle, antioxidising lillypilly and quandong for its moisturising qualities.

Something must be working as the company's spa products are stocked in 20 international spas and 49 spas within Australia including the uber luscious Qualia on Australia's Hamilton Island who use ancient Aboriginal stones for their hot stone massage.

When it comes to indigenous spa products Australia seems to be leading the way. Given the country's abundance of natural resources, untouched bushland and ancient wisdom it is not surprising. Gwinganna Lifestyle Retreat (www.gwinganna.com.au) is the country's leading destination spa and dedicates every afternoon to 'Dreamtime' for worn out urbanites seeking refuge and have recently launched a two and a half hour Tribal Dreaming body treatment that is performed in the bush utilising native clay and the healing sound energy of the didgeridoo.

Emirates' recent opening of the super swanky Wolgan Valley Resort and Spa in Lithgow (www.emirateshotelsresorts.com/wolgan-valley) near Australia's Blue Mountains saw a partnership between Emirates and the indigenous inspired Sodashi brand spa products for their Timeless Spa featuring the signature indigenous Australian earth mineral and algae mask. Sodashi's (www.sodashi.com.au) 120 chemical-free products

are stocked in 45 spas in 20 countries.

Founded by entrepreneur, Megan Larsen, who started by making beauty and body products at home and now utilises Australian Sandalwood to promote healthy skin cells, Wattle Seed for nourishment, Australian Green Clay for purifying and Niaouli for its anti bacterial qualities.

"Indigenous products tap into the benefits of the natural ingredients of a region that people can relate to" says Megan. "We are very fortunate to be based in Australia, a country that offers an amazing range of indigenous natural ingredients that have powerful anti-ageing and balancing properties. Our Timeless Spa products are inspired by the flora growing on the Emirates Wolgan Valley property including Broad Leaf Peppermint."

Still in Australia, the Endota spa brand (www.endota.com.au) founded by Melanie Gleeson and Belinda Fraser, began as a spa 'franchise' in 2000 and has developed into 49 spas around Australia in exotic locations from wine country to the Great Barrier Reef and snowy alpine regions. Spas focus on fun native Australian healing treatments including billabong footbaths with lemon myrtle and mint exfoliation.





THIS PAGE: *Wolgan Valley Resort and Spa; Endota on a bed of apples; and Moya.* OPENING PAGES: *Voya facial; Gwinganna body treatment; Voya Fucus Serratus; and Sodashi Organic Green Tea Salt Therapy Exfoliant.*

Endota has recently launched their own brand of beauty products featuring indigenous products including the orange and cehami gel cleanser, a river salt and desert lime shower gel using salts from the Murray River and a Kakadu Plum Face Mask which is rich in Vitamin C.

Across the ocean in New Zealand, Elizabeth Barbalich, founder of New Zealand certified organic brand Antipodes (www.antipodesnature.co.nz) is making positive waves. The mother of three utilises a number of native New Zealand elements, used by the Maori culture for centuries, in her Antipodes face and body range including Manuka, favoured by the honey bees who create the bioactive healing Manuka honey which has long been used to heal open wounds. Another New Zealand grown ingredient is the country's famous black fern which contains various types of glycosides known for firming and cell growth activation. "The spa industry is always seeking unique ingredients," says Elizabeth of the current spa trend. "Indigenous ingredients are highly therapeutic, not overly refined or modified and they are tested and tried for centuries."

The vast continent of Africa has been serving up thousands of therapeutic oils and minerals for just as many years. The ancient Egyptians used kohl for makeup, milk for bathing, henna for hair and myrrh for perfume.

In the far south of Africa, Fynbos plants

grow on the wide coastal belt along the West and South East coasts with over 6,200 plant species that do not exist anywhere else in the world.

The Moya (www.moyasan.com) face and body product range, founded by South African Alison Rightfoot, taps into the indigenous healing nature of these plants including the anti-inflammatory Cape Chamomile which forms a base for the range alongside the diuretic Buchu, soothing Lanyana, and the uplifting Zinziba oil. In keeping with the brand philosophy, Moya products are vegetable-based, fragrance free, colourant and preservative free, not tested on animals and use local labour farm communities.

Similarly the Pezula Spa Resort Hotel and Spa in Knysna (www.pezula.com) in the Western Cape of South Africa have recently launched their own signature treatment product range, Maruwa, based on the indigenous elements and Fynbos of the surrounding region. Products contain extracts of Baobab Oil, Rooibos Extract, Mongongo Nut Oil, Kalahari Melon Oil with a fresh forest aroma and a velvet texture.

The indigenous trend continues into Asia with the Ytsara (www.ytsara.com) range, originally created for professional spa use and is now available for consumer purchase. Used within such high end spas as Kamalaya in Koh Samui (www.kamalaya.com), Ytsara

is the 'essence of Asia' using more than 55 organic ingredients including herbs, roots, flowers and fruits picked by hand in the forests of Thailand or organically cultivated. Active ingredients include native Noni Leaf, Lotus, Pandan Leaf and White Orchid.

The Pacific regions have their own unique indigenous products, with coconut featuring highly in most spas throughout this region. Pure Fiji (www.purefiji.com) products are inspired by centuries of South Pacific healing traditions with pure coconut oil and flower extracts. The company has a community conscience and works closely with the Fijian community to create their products in an ethical and sustainable manner. Sugar scrubs, coconut lotions and body oils use botanical ingredients and wild harvested nut oils from trees in their natural habitat.

On the other side of the world in Wales, the St Brides Spa Hotel's Dolmor products (www.stbridesspahotel.com) use hand harvested seaweeds from the beaches surrounding the resort and in Ireland, Voya's organic beauty range (www.voya.ie) also uses the healing powers of marine based seaweed from its own coastline.

Whether from plantlife, earth or sea, indigenous native products will continue to heal the human race through the entrepreneurial spa leaders of the world who understand that ancient wisdom will never go out of style. 🌿