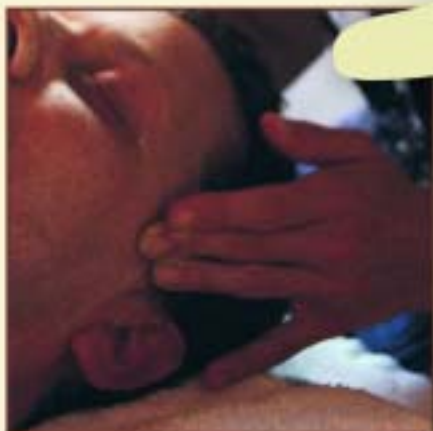


nifty new. services

By J. Elaine Spear

While there may be nothing new under the sun, there are always new ways to use Mother Nature's gifts. Spa owners across the country share services that are spicing up their menus without turning their basic offerings upside down. Here are their innovative offerings.





1. Liquid Acupuncture Massage

Diamante Day Spa
Fort Lauderdale, Florida
1½ hours, \$150; 2 hours, \$200

When it comes to relieving the symptoms of colds, stress and muscle aches, owner and educator Darlene Diamante knows best. Drawing from her background in both Chinese medicine and aromatherapy, Diamante has developed the Liquid Acupuncture Massage to alleviate common complaints by using both pressure point massage and expertly blended clinical aromatherapy oils. “Prescribed oils are massaged onto distressed areas—eucalyptus along the lung channel, for instance—followed by a pressure point massage,” explains Diamante. “Combining these two modalities has been a big winner for our spa because when used together, they rapidly intensify the results.”

Diamante emphasizes that therapists performing this service must have a solid background in either shiatsu or acupressure. “If you’re fortunate enough to have a clinical aromatherapist on staff, you can more accurately target your clients,” says Diamante. “If this isn’t possible, purchasing pre-blended clinical aromatherapy oils to relieve congestion, nervousness, arthritis pain and other common complaints is a strong second best.” In all cases, Diamante stresses the importance of training massage therapists in the basics of aromatherapy oils, asking clients key questions and what to look out for in terms of contraindications.

2. Hot Stone Facial Spa at the Villa Inn Indianapolis, Indiana 1 hour, \$70

Situated inside a magnificent 19th-century structure resembling an old-world Florentine villa, the Spa at the Villa Inn is proving to be a magnet for Midwest spa lovers. Beyond the visual feast that includes sweeping archways, trefoil window details and stone trim, clients are treated to a bevy of quality spa services, including the Villa’s signature Hot Stone Facial. Not to be confused with facials that use hot and cold stones to treat the skin, this exquisite service combines a traditional European facial with the use of hot stones to soothe achy muscles and joints of the neck, shoulders, arms and hands.

“Hot stones are placed on the client’s upper back and neck when she first reclines on the treatment table,” says owner Jeneane Life. “For ultimate relaxation and comfort, these stones remain in place until it’s time for the massage. After the mask is applied, a bergamot-scented antioxidant lotion is applied to the skin and several hot stones are used to massage the neck, shoulders, arms and hands. Any time one of our clients complains of chilliness, or simply wants extra comforting, she can also hold a warm, rounded stone in the palm of each hand during the entire treatment.”

3. Maya Stone Spa New York City 1 hour, \$85

Stone Spa is celebrating a new, much larger New York City location, but it still isn’t big enough to accommodate a full-size rasul chamber—a ceramic, temple-like structure that commands a large

space. To offset this limitation and bypass a massive expense, owner Carla Ciuffo has created a more diminutive steam room she calls the Maya. This chamber, complete with ornate tile and a small mosaic-style dome, provides a rasul-like experience that's both primitive and elegant. Like the rasul, it's a favorite spa treat for couples.



4. Ashiatsu
Sensia Studio
& Japanese
Day Spa
Houston, Texas
1 hour, \$100

Ashiatsu—commonly referred to as Ashiatsu Oriental Bar Therapy—is performed with the therapist standing over the client, holding on to parallel bars that are suspended from the ceiling. It was originally practiced by Buddhist monks in China, Thailand and Japan. Ashiatsu therapists work with their body weight and foot pressure to perform smooth, flowing, gliding movements. “At our day spa, our Ashiatsu service is performed with the client lying face down,” says Cynthia Christ, owner. “When this portion of the massage is complete, we have the client turn over and finish the treatment with a warm stone massage.”

Christ decided to include this massage discipline on her menu after receiving an Ashiatsu Oriental Bar Therapy herself. “Right after my first session, I felt like I was an inch taller,” she recalls. “The next day, I could hold my yoga positions longer and better than I ever had before.” She also reports that Ashiatsu has been an extremely popular service since it was first introduced and has proven to be the ideal service for male clients who want deep tissue work. Says Christ, “It gives them all the relief they crave, while saving the hands of our therapists. In fact, our therapists relate that a perfect workday consists of alternating Ashiatsu services with traditional massage.”

The Maya is strictly a do-it-yourself experience. Clients are invited to apply specific muds to their hair, faces and bodies, and bask in a steamy, beautifully tiled chamber. When things become a little too hot, a guest can push a button on the wall, and a cool, light rain falls in the middle of the chamber. “The rain is produced by two shower heads,” explains Ciuffo. “Guests can stand in the middle of the chamber to get the full benefit of the cool rain, or remain seated and simply catch the cooling drops in their hands.”

The Maya experience concludes in an adjacent shower area where guests once again become squeaky clean and are encouraged to slather on generous amounts of lotions aimed at making their skin smooth and sleek.

5. Baby Powder Pedicure
Maxine
Chicago, Illinois
1 hour 15 minutes, \$58

Known for luscious pedicures that touch all the senses, Maxine is heralding spring this year with its new Baby Powder Pedicure, a feminine, nurturing experience that's designed to totally pamper clients. The one-of-a-kind pedicure does this by including key elements like milky white water, soft powdery scents and emollient ingredients. “The actual scent is provided by a top-of-the-line French essential oil that embodies the familiar and comforting smell of baby powder,” says Bonnie Canavino, spa director. “To neatly tie together this nailcare experience, we serve our clients a French cream tea.”

The Baby Powder Pedicure is done much like a standard pedicure—the feet are soaked, treated, smoothed and moisturized—but that's where the familiarity ends. Canavino notes that

6. Japanese Nightingale Facial

Ten Thousand Waves
 Santa Fe, New Mexico
 Complete Nightingale Facial,
 55 minutes, \$97
 Deluxe Nightingale Facial,
 85 minutes, \$127.50

When it comes to skin-care treatments, nothing is earthier than the Japanese Nightingale Facial. Skipping the romanticized concoctions of seaweeds, clays and seeds, this facial relies on pure nightingale droppings—in the vernacular, poop—to cleanse, smooth and brighten the complexion. Japanese geishas and Kabuki actors have reportedly used nightingale droppings for hundreds of years to remove their heavy makeup and keep their complexions both flawless and light. Today, Ten Thousand Waves in Santa Fe, New Mexico, is using nightingale droppings as a key active ingredient in its signature treatment, the Japanese Nightingale Facial.

“Our Japanese Nightingale Facial is identical to our standard facial except we mix nightingale droppings and warm water to create a brightening and clarifying mask,” says Bob Sheffield, spa supervisor. “The droppings are actually collected from nightingales in the last factory of its kind in Japan. They’re sanitized and pulverized into a slightly gritty consistency. The enzymatic action of the droppings helps brighten the complexion, and the grittiness acts as a very effective exfoliant.” Sheffield also reports that essential oils may be added to this mask, not for esthetic reasons—“because it really doesn’t smell bad”—but for therapeutic benefits.



every product used in this service, including the powdered milk whipped together with essential oils to create a creamy, white foot bath, has rich, emollient properties. “Even though it may seem like a ‘chi-chi’ experience, there’s really a purpose for every ingredient we use,” she says. “The sugars in the milk, for instance, help exfoliate the skin. The calcium helps reinforce the nails. And the emollient properties used throughout this service leave the skin both fragrant and smooth as a baby’s bottom.”

7. Carrot Vitamin Wrap

Aria Spa, Vail Cascade
 Resort and Spa
 Vail, Colorado
 1 hour, \$105

This luscious service is a dessert lover’s dream. Smelling of freshly baked carrot cake—including all that tasty cream-cheese icing—the Carrot Vitamin Wrap titillates the senses while moisturizing and protecting the skin. This inspired service uses the Eminence Carrot Vitamin Mask, a product that offers a healthy dose of antioxidant vitamins and hydrating properties, which are abundant in its organic carrot oil and pulp. The treatment is particularly popular at the Vail Cascade Resort “après skiing,” when guests arrive right from the slopes tired, dehydrated and suffering from excessive UV-ray exposure.

Those who are fortunate enough to receive the Carrot Vitamin Wrap are treated to a warm, vanilla body mask and wrapped in a triple layer of blankets. After being enveloped in a soft-pack (float) table, they’re given a luxurious 30-minute scalp and neck massage. At the end of the wrap, a therapist applies body lotion using soothing effleurage-style strokes.

8. Akasuri

Spa Mystique at the
Century Plaza Hotel
Los Angeles, California
30 minutes, \$50

The Akasuri is based on the traditional Korean body scrub, but Westernized to the point of providing a soothing spa experience. In traditional Korean spas, this type of body scrub typically begins with a shower. Clients are then given a vigorous, unadorned exfoliation treatment during which they're flipped, turned and stretched as every part of their body—even between their toes—is scrubbed with a loofah-like towel. Spa Mystique has captured the essence of this treatment while creating a less rigorous version that leaves clients' skin and mindset in a much softer space.

Prior to the Akasuri scrub, clients can choose among a bevy of water/heat treatments, including two whirlpools (98 degrees and 104 degrees), a Swiss shower, a Japanese sento (sit-down shower), and wet and dry saunas. The actual service is done in a wet room where the therapist applies an exfoliating cleansing gel all over the body. This is followed by a full-body exfoliation treatment that's performed with a loofah mitt. Then the therapist rinses the body with a handheld hose and massages it with warm oil. Finally, a freshly pureed cucumber mask is applied to the face. "This mask is a key part of the traditional Korean body scrub treatment," says Tony Duran, guest service agent. "It soothes the skin, and reduces redness and puffiness. Cucumber also has antioxidant properties." To conclude the service, the therapist lightly mists toner over the face and body.



9. Deluxe Plant of the Sea Sok

La Bella Spa Salon
Albuquerque, New Mexico
90 minutes, \$75

Situated a stone's throw from the rambling Rio Grande river, La Bella Spa Salon provides spa aficionados with plenty of luxurious amenities, including an Ocean Flower Sok—a deep tub treated with freeze-dried seawater—prior to any spa service. This complimentary experience often serves as an introduction to the selection of bath cures on the spa menu, especially La Bella's signature Deluxe Plant of the Sea Sok.

This top-of-the-line service has an anticellulite, contouring effect as it deeply relaxes clients suffering from overwrought lifestyles.

The service begins with a full-body gommage, followed by a Swiss and waterfall shower. Clients are then immersed in a hydrotherapy bath that's infused with Phytomer freeze-dried seawater. While relaxing in this effervescent rous, clients benefit from a chromatherapy program that cycles through all of the colors of the rainbow from white to violet, blue, green, yellow, orange and red. To control the temperature, as well as to refresh the skin, the client can manually release a cool stream of water at any time.

Following the soak, clients relax for a few minutes before enjoying a body wrap that includes both a scalp and foot massage. The Deluxe Plant of the Sea Sok concludes with a light misting of seawater infused with essential oils and a full-body lotion application. ◆

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