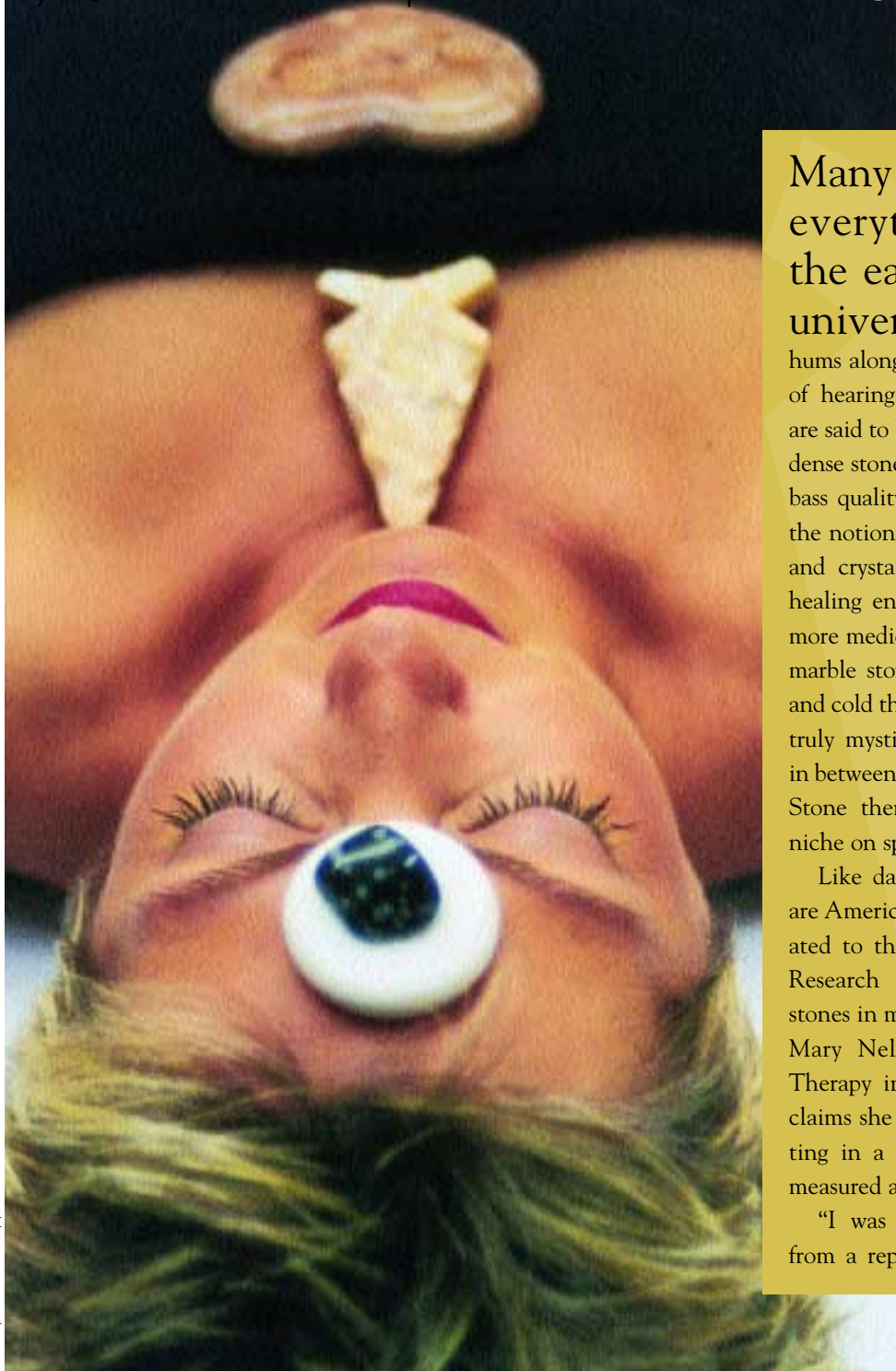


Stone Masons

By J. Elaine Spear



Courtesy/ LaStone Therapy

Many mystics believe everything born of the earth is part of a universal choir that hums along in tones beyond our range of hearing. Gemstones, for instance, are said to be altos and sopranos, while dense stones like basalt have more of a bass quality. Some therapists embrace the notion that stones like rose quartz and crystal enhance the body's own healing energy, while others follow a more medical path by using basalt and marble stones to create exquisite hot and cold therapies. Whether stones are truly mystical, medical or somewhere in between, one thing is perfectly clear: Stone therapies represent a growing niche on spa menus worldwide.

Like day spas, spa stone therapies are American creations that have radiated to the far corners of the earth. Research indicates that the use of stones in massage started in 1993 with Mary Nelson, founder of LaStone Therapy in Tucson, Arizona. Nelson claims she had an epiphany while sitting in a malfunctioning sauna that measured a puny 80 degrees.

"I was in chronic pain resulting from a repetitive stress injury caused



Courtesy Skincare Institute

The healing power of warmed stones has been recognized by numerous cultures for centuries.

by my massage work,” she recalls. “Craving relief and responding to spiritual guidance, I put the warm basalt stones that were used to heat the sauna on my injuries. The relief that spread over my body was almost instantaneous.”

Nelson, like many long-time stone therapists, is quick to acknowledge that even though formalized stone therapies are an American inspiration, stones have been used in healing and purification ceremonies for centuries in numer-

Belize with a group of native healers and midwives,” says Kelly Yearwood, stone therapist, teacher and herbal developer in Tulsa, Oklahoma. “I had my stones with me because I never go anywhere without them. One morning I put them outside my hut to be warmed by the sun and one of the women saw them. She came back with hers, and so did others in our group. These people aren’t aware that there’s a stone therapy craze going on outside their rural existence, and yet many of them use favorite stones as part of their therapies. They’re simply doing what their ancestors have always done—relying on local resources, whether they’re herbs or stones, to improve their well-being.”

Stepping Stones

In spas, stones have grown from being tools in a body therapy that primarily focuses on the benefits of hot and cold stones to the mind, body and spirit, to being adjuncts to all kinds of therapies, including reiki, reflexology, shi-

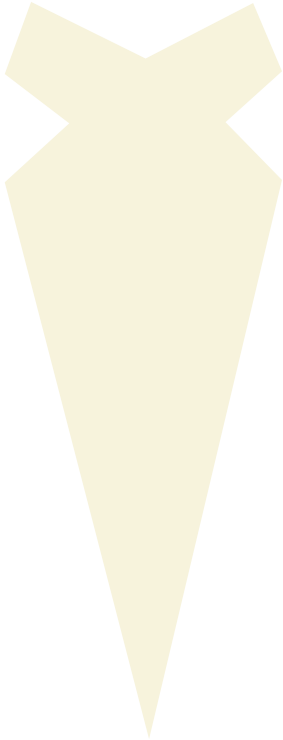
In spas, stones have become adjuncts to all kinds of therapies.

ous cultures around the world. Native American women from various tribes once placed large heated stones on their bellies to relieve cramps during their menses, and the use of heated stones in Native American sweat-lodge ceremonies is ongoing. Japanese monks have been known to use heated stones for health and healing, and ancient Hawaiians routinely wrapped castor bean leaves around hot stones and placed them on their bodies to treat nervous disorders and anxieties.

“I recently visited an herbal farm in

atsu, deep tissue and aromatherapy massage modalities. Adept therapists are also achieving special effects with stones—holding a hot and a cold stone in one hand, and allowing these two opposing temperatures to “chase” each other over the body, for example. This creates what some spa technicians refer to as a “man and woman” experience.

In addition, there are innumerable creative stone pedicures and manicures sprouting up on spa menus, as well as stone facials that quite often incorporate



the use of gemstones. “The wonderful thing about stone and gemstone therapies is they always impact my clients in a positive way,” says Kathe Watson, owner of Aromatica Day Spa and consultant for Essensa spa products, in Covington, Louisiana. “The warm pressure is good for the skin and muscles, it stimulates acupuncture points, and you can do certain massage techniques with stones that you cannot do with your fingers.”

Watson is currently sharing her joy of stones with a stone pedicure that uses a yoga-based position, separating the toes with warm stones to stretch the joints and encourage better energy flow. “We place the



Courtesy LaStone Therapy

Stone facials are finding their way onto many spa menus.

and yang experience. The Mint Leaf Pedicure at the Beyond Wraapture Urban Day Spa in Kelowna, British Columbia, Canada, is a summer refresher that stimulates, decongests and

“We place the stones between the toes before we wrap the feet and legs in steamy, herbal towels.”

Strategic placement of stones on pressure points and sore areas creates a heavenly treatment experience.



Courtesy The Sanctuary

stones between the toes right before we wrap the feet and legs in steamy, herbal towels,” she says. “To enhance the treatment, we also have our clients hold a hot stone in each hand during the entire pedicure.”

Summer stone pedicures provide instant foot relief for heat-weary clients. Some spas in urban areas place their clients’ feet on ice-cold marble stones and then fill the foot bath with warm water to create a yin

soothes the feet and legs with a mint and stone leg massage. And Remedies Day Spa in Whitefish, Montana, offers the Honey and Cream Hot Foot Rub. The highlight of this luscious service is a warm cream and honey hot stone massage on the feet and lower legs.

Quality stone facials are reportedly nothing short of nirvana. In one service, hot stones are placed between the toes, on the Achilles’ tendon, along the clavicle, across the heart, at the base of the trapezius muscles—or on any area holding tension—while clients receive a deluxe facial. This allows guests to quickly tumble into their facial moment, while also enjoying a full-body spa experience.

Cindy LeBlanc, owner of Toccare (“to touch” in Italian) in Topsfield, Massachusetts, notes that warm stones relax the face and allow treatment



Courtesy David J. Witchell @ 25 South

Stones can be used hot or cold, depending on the needs of the client.

products to penetrate deeper, while cold stones soothe and help tone the skin. “During our stone facials, we do a stone massage on the face, neck, shoulders, hands and feet,” she says. “After we apply the mask, we also place gemstones on the seven chakras,

ing an overall heaviness or having the sensation they’re floating. Says LeBlanc, “Most often our clients are so out of it at the end of their treatments that we make a point of refreshing them with an energizing tea before they get off the table.”

Techniques and Tools

Since modern-day treatments first took off in the early 1990s, there has been a continuous evolution of techniques. This is a natural course of events since stones are traditionally “interpreted” by each therapist slightly differently, with many finding they work best when used to support their specialties.

Craig Lozzi, owner of Fallbrook Wellness Spa in Fallbrook, California, had his entire staff trained on stone therapies, but still felt something was missing. “We talked a lot about how we could turn our stones into true signature treatments,” says Lozzi. “Through this collective brainstorming, we created what we call ‘integrative stone therapies’ that include stones in a variety of massage modalities. We believe this is a better fit with our spa since the main focus of our business is massage.”

“After we apply the mask, we place gemstones on the seven chakras.”

including rose quartz on the heart, amethyst on the third eye and crystal on the crown chakra.”

Some estheticians pour ice-cold water over these gemstones before placing them on the chakra points, while others prefer to use them at room temperature. Either way, stone technicians who incorporate gemstones in their facials report clients seeing colors, losing their sense of position, feel-

There’s also the growing use of cold stones, a practice that was once considered too shocking for the average American spa client. “Hot and cold therapies are regularly used by physical therapists to help mitigate pain and speed the healing of soft tissues,” says Nelson. “When I first started using cold therapy, I usually used only two or three cold stones. Today, I often use an equal number of hot and cold stones during a

single treatment. It all depends on the complaints that need to be addressed in any given session.”

The quality of stones used by therapists is a hotly debated topic by some. Kathleen Willow, massage therapist for Ten Thousand Waves in Santa Fe, New Mexico, and a LaStone instructor who recently created the advanced workshop *Dances With Stones*, shares that

well-matched pair,” says Willow, “you run out of heat more quickly in one hand than in the other, plus the differences in size and weight can affect the pressure you’re exerting in each hand.”

Marble is considered the best source for cold stones since it has the uncanny ability to resist environmental temperatures. “When you touch a marble statue or even a piece of marble that has



“Basalt stones must be the right size, thickness and shape to fit certain areas of the body.”

even though basalt stones are known for their heat-retentive properties, not all perform equally well.

“Basalt stones must be the right size, thickness and shape to fit certain areas of the body,” she explains. “You shouldn’t try to treat the neck with a round stone, for instance, since an oblong one is so much better.” The real challenge, though, is finding suitable pairs of stones that are the same shape, weight and thickness. “If you don’t have a

been in a warm room for hours, it still feels cool to the touch,” says Nelson. “This is why we choose to use marble stones for our cold therapies.”

Marble, by the way, is always shaped and polished since it doesn’t have the advantage of being naturally tumbled in rivers and oceans for decades before being used by therapists. Some specialty basalt stones are also cut into ideal shapes for certain parts of the body. And in all cases, quality commercial basalt stones are tumbled and polished just like marble to provide the smoothest, most uniform finish.

For your convenience, there are now many spa distributors offering sets of stones for spa therapies. Yet, practitioners continue to seek stones from rock companies and local streambeds. Patty Elzinga, owner of Heidi Christine’s Salon, Day Spa & Wellness Center in Ada, Michigan, says she walks the shores of Lake Michigan in search of the right stones and invariably comes home with at least one matched set. And Remedies Day Spa uses only stones that are handpicked from the nearby Clark Fork River.

Placing warm stones between the toes is believed to increase energy flow throughout the body.



Courtesy Morel European Spa

Stone Ripples

Though stone therapies have been widely publicized in consumer magazines and local newspapers over the past decade, the public doesn't appear to be tired of hearing about them—especially innovative services like those offered by the Stonespa in New York City. This small business is owned by Jeff Schwartz and Carla Ciuffo, two massage therapists who decided to branch out on their own four years ago by opening a stone-based spa.

popular treatment at the moment is Salt-Stone-Glow, a 50-minute, full-body stone massage and a 20-minute salt glow service with essential oils, sandalwood and a hint of black tea.”

Willow also comments that using the right stone lingo is essential to a balanced service of hot and cold stones. “When you have a good understanding of physiology and soft tissue aggravations, you know how important it is to use both hot and cold temperatures on the muscle

Stones are one of the few newer treatments that you can promote without giving away the store.

Stonespa's innovative menu includes Full Body Stone, Half-a-Stone, Hot Stone Foot Massage and Earth & Sky, a treatment featuring hot stones, massage, reflexology and cooling aloe Tea Jelly. Urban-weary clients preparing for summer can indulge in the Lemon Ginger Back Flip, a back facial that includes a salt crystal and shea butter scrub, a mask and a hot stone massage on the neck, shoulders and back.

groups,” says Willow. “But if you say to a woman, ‘I'm going to be using cold stones on you today,’ she's likely to refuse. I've found it's important to explain that marble stones possess a feminine coolness that feels more like a gentle, refreshing rain. Once women relent and allow themselves to experience both temperatures, I've heard only positive comments about their experiences.

Different size stones should be used for different areas of the body.

“Everything on our menu is selling very well,” says Ciuffo, “but our most

“One of the most beautiful things about stone therapies in terms of building your business is that when you're highly skilled and provide an exquisite stone treatment, you become busy in no time through word-of-mouth advertising and occasional bits of publicity,” continues Willow. “We've done this very thing at the Ten Thousand Waves spa. When we first introduced our stone massage, we dedicated one room to this modality. At first we filled any downtime with regular massage services. But now that our stone services



Courtesy The Spa at Moody Gardens Hotel



A La Mode

are in high demand, we only do stone therapies in this room. We're currently repeating this process by dedicating a second room to stones."

Stones are one of the few newer treatments that you can promote without giving away the store. Watson reports that stone therapies can be successfully marketed by simply using a couple of hot stones during a regular massage. "We have a set of stones in every massage room, making it easy for therapists to grab a warm stone or two during a service and use them on clients," she says. "Right away, they want to know what that wonderful, warm sensation is. Our therapists always explain about the stones and how they can have a complete stone massage the next time they come in. This alone has really

helped build our business." ♦

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