



ILLUSTRATION: MARIE CUFFARO THE GAZETTE

FOUNTAIN OF HOPE

LOTIONS AND POTIONS PROMISING HEALTHY, YOUTHFUL SKIN ARE ENTICING TO AN AGING POPULATION, BUT DOES THE SCIENCE BEHIND THEM LIVE UP TO THE MYTH?

EVA FRIEDE
GAZETTE FASHION EDITOR

In a grainy, black-and-white film, a safari-suited scientist hikes through the rainforest of Madagascar in search of the rare vanilla planifolia, an ingredient to grace Chanel's latest and most costly anti-aging skin care cream, Sublimage.

The production values for the film are strangely poor for Chanel, whose usual promotional material tends to the magnificent. But this is as slick a marketing campaign as the glossy, gold-toned press packet for the \$325 jar of face cream.

Chanel appears to be tracking a remote and mythical fountain of youth in its campaign for Sublimage. And it is far from alone in upping the ante and price for the promise of youthful skin. Polynesian lagoon water, glacier ice, caviar, narcissus bulbs, kelp and pulp derived from South African grasslands are among the incredi-

ble ingredients touted to smooth wrinkles, lighten, brighten and rejuvenate your skin.

Prestige products that promise the moon and cost the stars are among the trends rocking the booming skin-care industry. Whitening products, a blurring of mass and prestige technology, and cosmetics or doctor lines are also feeding the sales of beauty lotions and potions, which amounted to \$55.5 billion U.S. worldwide in 2005.

In the luxury arena, which could be trying to distance itself from increasingly sophisticated mass-market products, Christian Dior has just launched L'Or de Vie, \$380 for the cream, \$420 for the extract, derived from the "miracle of Yquem," home of sauterne wines. Meanwhile, Guerlain has Orchidée Impériale, packaged in a beautiful cobalt jar, at \$425. In fall, Giorgio Armani will come out with Crema Nera with obsidian, a mineral compound found

in the volcanic soil of Pantelleria. Not impressed? How about Valmont's L'Elixir des Glaciers or La Prairie's Skin Caviar Luxe Cream, each at \$750?

Many companies seem to be trying to mimic the mythology of Crème de la Mer: the well-preserved granny in luxury skin care formulated by NASA scientist Max Huber, who is said to have cooked up a "broth" of kelp and vitamins to heal burns. It rings in at what today sounds like a reasonable \$275.

Please see FOUNTAIN, Page D2

WHAT DOES IT ALL MEAN?

Read our Q&A with skin-care expert Paula Begoun, who explains terminology and clears up some of the myths, under Editor's Picks at montrealgazette.com.



A great complexion is "all about hygiene," says esthetician Irene Yiannatsoula, who has flawless skin.

MARIE-FRANCE COALLIER THE GAZETTE

Men want that magic potion, too

While male skin-care market is booming, guys less likely to accept product claims at face value

EVA FRIEDE
GAZETTE FASHION EDITOR

Let's call him Marty. He spends \$300 to \$400 a month on skin care, including a \$290 cream by Valmont and a regular facial at the gentle hands of his favourite esthetician.

Why? "Because I'm vain," said the 60-year-old estate planner, who changed his mind about being identified in *The Gazette* soon after our interview.

He also works out four times a week, watches what he eats and takes supplements for his skin. "My face is excessively good."

Irene Yiannatsoula, owner of Spa de Molinard on Laurier Ave. W., agreed her client looks a good 10 years younger than his age.

"My kids call me a metrosexual," Marty said. "I should have been born a woman."

Everybody wants to look younger, he said, but he hasn't had plastic surgery or injections – at least not yet. He does not have the nerve for that, he claimed.

"He doesn't need to," Yiannatsoula chimed in.

Marty might be the rare man who spends that much, but men are buying into skin care big time.

Sales of men's skin-care products in Canada grew from \$5.1 million in 2001 to \$12.5 million in 2006, an increase of 142.8 per cent, or 19.4 per cent compound annual growth rate. In the same period, overall sales in skin care rose to \$955.5 million from \$656.2 million, or 46.8 per cent, according to market research firm Euromonitor International.

Men are looking for the finest products, clinically proven results and clean packaging without any frou-frou, said Euromonitor research analyst Virginia Lee. And whereas women will put up with initial tackiness in their skin creams, men insist on a lightweight feel and no greasiness, she added.

"It remains to be seen if they will pay as much as women," she added, noting premium brands have only recently added men's lines.

Yiannatsoula said her clients believe in the expensive products. It's a matter of trust, she said.

"Your skin talks to me," she said, recommending certain products from her arsenal of lines like Esthederm, Darphin, Valmont, Cellcosmet and Ishi.

It's very tempting – and expensive – to try her regime. Yiannatsoula, 35, who trained in Paris with Darphin, has flawless skin.

"It's all about hygiene," she said. That, sunscreen and the proper mix of exfoliation, whitening, collagen and tightening products.

Health regulations not strict enough for some

Cosmetics sold in Canada must meet the regulations of the Food and Drugs Act, meaning they must be safe to use and not pose any health risk. In addition, cosmetic regulations require that they be manufactured, preserved, packed and stored under sanitary conditions.

And ingredients must be listed on the package along with warnings of dangers if the product is improperly used.

That's not good enough for Carol Spector of Breast Cancer Action Montreal, which joined in the newly formed lobby group Safe Cosmetics Committee Canada last weekend in Ottawa.

Spector is concerned about substances like parabens, used in thousands of products as preservatives, coal tar dyes,

petroleum distillates and formaldehyde.

For instance, there are perhaps 200 names for coal tar dyes, found in hair dyes and dandruff shampoos, she said. "How is the consumer supposed to make sense of that?"

The dyes can cause blindness if used on the eyelashes or brows, which is indicated on labels in Canada.

Sector claimed that talc, used in blush, is a carcinogen. However, the American Cancer Society and Health Canada said that's not the case. They said asbestos was the carcinogen associated with talc, and at-home talcum powders are now required to be asbestos-free.

Parabens have received a lot of attention recently because some animal stud-

ies have shown mild estrogenic properties. Health Canada says a British study did find parabens in breast tumours, but in amounts far lower than the paraben levels known to produce effects similar to estrogens. "Therefore, there is no evidence at this time to suggest a link between parabens and breast cancer."

Said Spector: "I understand there is no smoking gun. For years there was no smoking gun with lung cancer." It's the precautionary principle, she said. "Better safe than sorry."

To that end, the group is lobbying for hazard labelling – before all the evidence is in. "If there is a known or suspected carcinogen, let me decide."

EVA FRIEDE

FOUNTAIN Technology quick to reach mass market

CONTINUED FROM D1

And some people are lapping it up. "Cost is not an issue," said Shelley Rozenwald, former VP of cosmetics at Holt Renfrew. "If the product works they will buy it."

The first substances with independent studies to verify claims of skin rejuvenation are glycolic and lactic acids, Vitamin C and tretinoin – prescribed under various brand names – and its derivative, retinol, said dermatologist Suzanne Gagnon.

Then there is a growing body of literature on peptides, or micro-collagen, ceramides for moisturizing, antioxidants like green tea and idebenone (developed by Allergan, makers of Botox), she added. However, cosmetics are not standardized, so there is no guarantee you will get an effective concentration in your beauty cream, she said.

Your best bets are those clinical brands, she suggested, naming Reversa, NeoStrata, Rejuviance, Dermaglow and Strivectin.

The extravagant formulations from pricey ingredients might be effective, Gagnon said, but not necessarily more so than less expensive ingredients.

"The truth is there are impressive skin care and makeup products at all prices," Paula Begoun, a skin-care expert known as the cosmetics cop, wrote in an email response to our queries.

Among some of the less expensive ingredients: calcium, soy, shiitake and a veritable cocktail of fruits and veggies.

And don't forget your broad-spectrum sun protection, all dermatologists order. That means UVA and UVB filters, found in Parsol 1789, also known as avobenzone, Tinosorb, and L'Oréal's proprietary Mexoryl, as well as zinc oxide and titanium dioxide.

Dermatologists are conventional: They want studies, they want proof, Gagnon said.

Dermatologist Ari Demirjian has not seen studies on most of the luxury products: "Most likely they're lacking some sort of true medical or scientific clinical trial to back their claims," he said.

"I would like to see a few studies on a product showing that it actually does something, and those studies being independent studies, not from the factory that is making the product."

Confused yet? You should be. Euromonitor International, a Chicago-based market research firm, reports that one of the main trends in the Canadian skin care industry is increasingly blurred lines between prestige and mass market brands, the result of technological advances.

The promises of technology – and marketing – are enticing to our aging population, and to a younger demographic that wants to prevent signs of aging: In Canada, sales of skin care products hit \$955.5 million in 2006, up from \$800 million the previous year, according to Euromonitor.

Virginia Lee, a research analyst with the firm, says Canadians seem more skeptical and value conscious, with less disposable income than U.S. consumers and fewer department store outlets for luxury goods.

In terms of the advances of mass market companies, P&G's Olay led the way, with products boasting similar benefits to more expensive products. Cosmetics giant L'Oréal is also able to diffuse research from premium brands in its stable like Lancôme, while Johnson & Johnson borrows from its research with Renova, or tretinoin, for its drugstore brand, Neutrogena, according to Lee.

"The speed of technology in the mass

market has increased. Ten years ago, it took a very long time for technology from the premium level to filter down to the mass," she said.

Still, there's probably a difference between the expensive and cheaper creams. "I doubt it's the same product and I would think they would be using a lower concentration of the active ingredient," Lee said.

Some of those ingredients may be costly, she added, but it's questionable how well they work. "At some level, they do offer some kind of a benefit or people wouldn't buy it."

Among the benefits one can reasonably expect is, at the very least, a dewy complexion bestowed even by a \$5 moisturizer, Lee said. Light reflectors can make skin seem more luminous, she said, and most dermatologists agree retinol helps speed cell turnover and stimulate collagen while antioxidant kill off free radicals.

Other products have more of a visual effect, by plumping up cells or filling in lines – temporarily, she added.

Whitening products are also having their day – out of the sun. Hydroquinone has the highest efficacy and longest history of safe usage behind it according to Begoun.

Another key trend, especially in the United States, is the advent of doctor brands, with dermatologists developing their own lines and selling them on talk shows like Oprah, Lee said. These brands, also known as cosmeceuticals, have a medicinal atmosphere about them, with clean, no-nonsense packaging. They span the high end, with lines like SkinCeuticals and Cellcosmet, to more accessible brands like Vichy, RoC and Avène.

And consumers are buying into organic or natural products, too. Stella McCartney has just launched Carat, which promises luxury in the certified organic line.

Cosmeceuticals are the flavour of the day, says Robert Lavoie, president of Montreal's Dermtek Pharmaceuticals, who has an impressive record in the skin care business.

He launched his company 21 years ago with four products for specific conditions and eventually developed two groundbreaking brands: Umbrelle, with Parsol 1789 – broad spectrum sun protection (which he sold to L'Oréal 10 years ago), and Reversa, with glycolic acid, the first and most documented molecule for anti-aging.

"It tickles the collagen back into production, it hydrates the skin, it creates exfoliation. So it really is the only molecule that will truly give glow to the face," Lavoie said.

Still confused? "Regrettably there is no magic potion or combination of products in any price range that can truly make wrinkles disappear," Begoun wrote.

Here is what works in helping the skin repair itself and function optimally according to Begoun.

■ Daily application of a state-of-the-art sunscreen, with SPF 15 or higher as well as antioxidants.

■ Tretinoin – Retin A, Renova or Avita – and tazarotene – Tazorac. These are prescription drugs (which some people find difficult to tolerate).

■ Alpha or beta-hydroxy acids (AHAs and BHAs), including glycolic, lactic and salicylic acids.

■ Hydroquinone-based, skin-lightening products.

■ A gentle cleanser.

■ A well-formulated, state-of-the-art moisturizer.

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