

rooted *regimens*

The tradition of French
skin care and spa culture

by Kirsten Sheridan, licensed aesthetician



L

“Le français” is globally renowned for their “je ne sais quoi,” effortless beauty, and sophisticated glamour. French icons like Bridgette Bardot, Coco Chanel, and Catherine Deneuve have influenced the French skin care industry. The French like to be known for their style, embracing a laid-back imperfect impression while accentuating their natural beauty. French skin culture differs from the United States in many ways. Even though the lines are becoming blurred through globalization, the French have several characteristics that are the basis for their philosophy.

WATER-BASED TREATMENTS

Prevention is a vital part of French philosophy, and the French embrace their bodies and skin head to toe, not just the face, neck, and décolleté. Skin care is essential, and tips are passed down through generations and at a much younger age than is the norm in the United States.

Resort spas are a significant tourist business in France and are also frequented by the locals. Water is at the heart of French spa culture. Traditionally, spas in France depend on specific water-based treatments like balneotherapy and thalassotherapy, which has become a staple. French native Jacques De La Bonnardiere coined the term “thalassotherapy” in 1865 from the Greek word “thalassa,” meaning “sea.”

Thalassotherapy is a popular therapy that uses the therapeutic benefits of seawater for skin and general health practices. Seawater is rich in iodine, trace elements, and mineral salts. It combines seawater with treatments utilizing muds, sand, and minerals. There are over 50 internationally renowned centers (often resort-style spas) situated around the coastal regions of France that provide this kind of therapy.

Balneotherapy is more prevalent in France’s mountainous and vol-

cano regions. It utilizes spring water, which is rich in sulfur, selenium silica, radium, and other minerals, to create thermal baths that promote healthy skin. Combined with scrubs, muds, and clays, it is a widely offered and renowned treatment.

The Vichy Shower

The Vichy shower is another popular treatment in France, but it is also utilized in spas worldwide (though without the benefits of the Vichy mineral spring). Originating in Vichy, France, Vichy mineral water is considered to have many therapeutic benefits. A five to seven-head shower spaced along a vertical rail over a shallow wet bed with water drainage holes, the Vichy shower is used as a stand-alone treatment or combined with body scrubs, mud treatments, and body wraps.

Vichy showers can be used as a chakra balancing treatment, relying on the water pressure from the multiple showerheads. The shower provides a pulsating massage, but

other massage techniques like hot stone therapy may be an option alongside this experience. Traditionally, the water in a Vichy shower alternates between cold and warm temperatures, but it has adapted to just the use of warm water in many global spas. If used correctly, a Vichy shower increases circulation, releases stress and tension, and is considered a thermal cure for many ailments.

HAMMAMS & THE SUDATONIC

Hammams are found in France, particularly Paris, and are similar to a Turkish bathhouse. This is where the French may spend a couple of hours if they need to feel rejuvenated. Hammam treatments are based on sauna and steam room principles. Saunas warm and prepare the body for gommage, a cleansing and exfoliating body treatment. The gommage, referred to in France as “savon noir,” or “black soap,” is rubbed on the body and left for about 15 minutes. After, a massage





therapist will vigorously rub the body and might also hose the body down based on personal preference. This is followed by a massage anywhere from 10 minutes to an hour. Another hammam treatment involves hot and cold water being splashed alternatively onto the face under the assumption that the hot water will cleanse and relax the pores, while the cold water will constrict and soothe.


The sudatonic treatment was developed by a French doctor, Dr. Yves Loones, in Paris in the late 1990s. This is a practice that is adopted in many French spas. Essentially, skin is prepared with detoxifying ingredients, and then, the client is wrapped in an infrared blanket. After 20 to 30 minutes of sweating, which boosts circulation and helps detoxify, excess water is eliminated and excess fat begins to break up.

CRYOTHERAPY

On the other end of the temperature spectrum, cryotherapy claims to increase skin tightening, reduce cellulite, reduce fine lines and wrinkles, and increase the speed of skin repair. An individual unit is used where the head and shoulders are exposed. The rest of the body is subjected to temperatures between -184 degrees Fahrenheit and -256 degrees Fahrenheit for two to three minutes maximum. Cryotherapy is considered a nonmedical treatment in this format and can be found in the spa environment. Although relatively new, the treatment claims to help with pain relief, weight loss, reduction in inflammation, the slowing of skin aging, and helping skin conditions like eczema. In the spirit of the French philosophy of preventative care, cryo-

the aesthetic report

Eavesdrop on the industry every month with The Aesthetic Report, a podcast by DERMASCOPE.

 Subscribe wherever you listen to podcasts!



therapy is gaining traction in France.

MASSAGE MATTERS

Facial massage is a significant component of facial treatments in France, often utilizing deep European facial massage techniques and incorporating the face, neck, décolleté, and, in many cases, the breasts if the client chooses. Massage is not a one-size-fits-all modality, and there are often many options from lifting, relaxing, oxygenating, firming, anti-wrinkle, and antiaging to name a few. The massage portion of the facial is generally the longer portion of the overall treatment. The French philosophy embraces the theory that massage should not just be experienced through touch but also through smell, which is no surprise since Grasse,

France is considered the world's fragrance capital.

The French recognize the importance of healthy skin and are particularly keen on anti-cellulite treatments and massage. Pharmacies, doctors, and aestheticians all offer products and solutions for cellulite prevention and improvement. The Palper Rouler method, which describes a pinch and rolling action, can break up connective tissue adhesions, improve lymphatic flow, help flush out toxins, and increase circulation to the area. Multiple treatments are needed and then follow-up ones for maintenance.

COSMETIC FILLERS

On the flip side, France is home to some of the most globally renowned manufacturers of cosmetic fillers. Cosmetic fillers are more commonplace than



DERMASCOPE Digital

DERMASCOPE is the go-to professional guide for industry news, articles, webinars, events, trends, products, and more – including the print magazine's full archive. Subscriptions start at just \$4 a month.

dermascope.com/digital-magazine

Get your first month FREE at dermascope.com/subscribe



the French client often likes to admit. In the spirit of understated natural beauty, French clients opt for multiple fillers in smaller amounts, creating the appearance of an all-over improvement as opposed to hyper-focusing on just one area. Plastic surgery is performed, but the French are considered less open about having surgery. The French view plastic surgery in the United States as a “go bold or go home” philosophy, whereas in France, having plastic surgery is more of a do not tell philosophy. Subtlety is essential to the French client.

French aestheticians typically do use technology for face and body treat-

ments, as there is still a heavy emphasis on hands-on treatment. Body scrubs, salt treatments, herbal linen wraps, and cellulite treatments are far more commonplace in France than in the United States. Electric brushes with high-frequency and galvanic treatments can still be found. However, microdermabrasion and microneedling are performed in more medical settings and are not standard practice for aestheticians yet.

AESTHETICIAN TRAINING

With that said, French aestheticians have somewhat different training

Ask the Experts



Ask as many questions as you want in our new, online platform called “Ask the Experts.” Get advice from industry experts in skin care, beauty, body, hair removal, wellness, and business. It is like having a mentor you can turn to in the palm of your hand! Plus, it is all for FREE.

Start asking here: dermascope.com/asktheexperts

than those in the states. Its education system focuses more on vocational aspects and ensures those interested in a craft like aesthetics can focus on it earlier in their career process. On-the-job training is available while one is still in school and getting their general education. Training focuses not just on being an aesthetician but also on business, law, entrepreneurship, and other necessary tools to be successful.

Anatomy and physiology are an integral part of aesthetician training. Aestheticians are trained in facials, manicures and pedicures, and waxing as their primary education. In France, the only individuals qualified to perform massage therapy on the body are physiotherapists and fall under the regulation of massage therapists. If an aesthetician wishes to focus on body treatments like cellulite, a specific post-graduate course is required, which can be costly. There are various levels of training for an aesthetician in France. However, the shortest qualification is approximately two years and covers clinical experience, usually in the form of an apprenticeship in a spa.

THE FRENCH PHARMACY

There are two types of pharmacies in France. The pharmacy that focuses on medicines and the para-pharmacies that may carry medicines but have a prominent focus on skin and personal care.

Pharmacies in France are usually independently owned and operated, as there are fewer chains. As easy as pharmacies are to come by so is skin care advice from a pharmacist, which may surprise most Americans. One French pharmacy staple that has trickled down the pipeline

be found in a pharmacy but rather in beauty salons (as they are still often referred to in France). Guinot created the hydradermie treatment, previously known as cathiodermie, which is an electrical ionization treatment that increases the penetration of actives.

INGRÉDIENTS FRANÇAIS

The French philosophy of skin care plays to the understanding that the human body's natural processes are the key to resolving skin issues. Therefore, French skin care brands incorporate phytotherapy

“IN THE SPIRIT OF UNDERSTATED NATURAL BEAUTY, FRENCH CLIENTS OPT FOR MULTIPLE FILLERS IN SMALLER AMOUNTS, CREATING THE APPEARANCE OF AN ALL-OVER IMPROVEMENT AS OPPOSED TO HYPER-FOCUSING ON JUST ONE AREA.”

is micellar water. This technology originated in France decades ago to solve the hard water problem found in many French regions. Microscopic cells called micelles are suspended in soft water and are recommended to replace tap water during skin care routines.

GUINOT

It would be remiss to talk about French skin care trends without mentioning Dr. Jean Daniel Mondin, son of a plastic surgeon and founder of the Guinot, Mary Cohr group established in 1972. Voluntarily agreeing to pharmaceutical standards, Guinot cannot

Due to the success of their international training programs, Rene Guinot is known worldwide for its products. Guinot-Mary Cohr Academy was opened in 2012, providing nationally recognized vocational secondary school and graduate diploma programs, from certificat d'aptitude professionnelle, brevet professionnel, baccalauréat, and brevet de technicien supérieur, a move made in response to a lack of highly trained beauty therapists. In addition, Guinot is known for their technology, having developed other technologies, including an electrical treatment for cellulite.

and phytonutrients in their formulations. In fact, many of the skin care lines sold by aestheticians are based on phytotherapy. This therapy uses plants and their constituents for health and wellness applications. France, known for its perfumeries, appreciates the ability to treat skin with natural ingredients and encompasses the olfactory senses into treatments.

Aromatherapy

Aromatherapy has a deep and rich history in France, and essential oils are a treasured French staple. Fields of lavender, rose, jasmine, and orange, to name a few, can be





found mainly in the south of France. Aromatherapy has long been combined with phytotherapy and herbal medicine in French culture. Hydrosols that made their debut long before essential oils are often used to customize massage therapy oils and creams and add essence to steam towels and cleansing water. Many French pioneers of aromatherapy, like Dr. Jean Valnet, Rene

Maurice Gattefosse, and Marguerite Maury, have developed the French global culture. Many French skin care brands have their roots in essential oils. French pharmacies sell essential oils for skin conditions that are prescribed in capsules for many ailments. Although moving away from this model, the French have long endorsed ingestion of essential oils.

SUN PROTECTION & REGULATION

Sun protection is a global concern, and France is no different. However, regulations in France and Europe are much stricter than in the United States. Despite heightened limitations, a recent study conducted by the Federation des Entreprises de La Beaute found that 40% of

the French population does not use sunscreen regularly or uses inadequate amounts, citing concerns of toxic ingredients and environmental pollution. Sun filters in France and Europe have some of the strictest regulations in the world.

FRENCH INSPIRED

French skin care routines are based on the idea that less is more. Simple practices with fewer products, essential quality, fewer ingredients, and clean formulations are common. French skin care routines are based on a results-focused regimen that includes cleansing, toning, and moisturizing. The French do use hydroxy acids in formulations and peels, but this is a more recent development. Cleansers focus more on milk and oils instead of foaming or harsh cleansing ingredients. Toning is an essential step, and the French prefer flower essences like rose water in place of more astringent formulations. Moisturizers focus on hydration; hydrated skin is essential for achieving that Parisian glow.

In a place where people consult their local pharmacist on common skin care matters and reserve their visits to the spa for a special deep cleanse or specific focused treatment, tradition is still at the heart of France's skin care industry. While

global influences are evident, they are not as quick to jump on the trendy ingredient train or seek out the latest and greatest miracle product. **d**

References

1. Balneotherapy. ScienceDirect. (2019). Retrieved March 7, 2022, from <https://www.sciencedirect.com/topics/medicine-and-dentistry/balneotherapy>
2. Cryotherapy: An Asset for Beauty. CRYOFAST Centre de Cryothérapie Corps Entier. (2020, August 29). Retrieved March 7, 2022, from <https://cryofast.fr/en-for-beauty/>
3. History and Evolution of Hydrotherapy. Vichy Shower. (n.d.). Retrieved March 7, 2022, from <https://www.vichyshower.com/AboutUs.cfm?ID=6>
4. Sudatonic Slimming System. Cellulite Endermologie Center. (n.d.). Retrieved March 7, 2022, from <https://cellulite-endermologie-center.com/sudatonic-slimming-system/>
5. The Brand's History. Guinot. (n.d.). Retrieved March 7, 2022, from https://www.guinot.com/en_GB/the-brands-history



Kirsten Sheridan has a higher national diploma in beauty therapy from the

United Kingdom and is a licensed aesthetician. She has 20 years of experience as an aesthetician and educator, holds a teaching qualification through City and Guilds London, and is a CIDESCO diplomat. Sheridan's other qualifications include massage therapy, aromatherapy, reflexology, and electrology. She has a personal training qualification through the National Academy of Sports Medicine, although not in active practice. In addition, she is the owner and founder of knowskin.com, an on-line learning hub for aestheticians. Sheridan taught for Dermalogica, International Dermal Institute, San Francisco Institute of Esthetics and Cosmetology, San Jose City College, and The Dermal Sciences Institute.

put it into practice

INTERNATIONAL INGREDIENTS

Industry leaders highlight ingredients from around the world that are a must-have for skin care and spa professionals.

①



1

Elina Fedotova, L.E.

Founder & Chief Formulator of Elina Organics

"The main ingredient in this skin-restoring, hydrating, and nourishing moisturizer is Lubomirskia freshwater sponge, found only in Russia's Lake Baikal. Lubomirskia can help regulate the secretion of sebum, increase fibroblast regeneration, and overall improve general skin appearance and resiliency."

elinaorganics.com



2

Lydia Sarfati

CEO & Founder of Repêchage

"This new serum contains mastic water from the Aegean Island of Chios, Greece, used for centuries and known to help reduce dryness and the appearance of fine lines and dark spots."

repechage.com

②



3



3

Elizabeth Fardon

Global Education Director for UltraCeuticals

"A nongreasy formula, Face & Body Recovery Cream contains a powerful blend of soybean extract, Tasmanian berry extracts, and vitamin E phosphate to soothe dry skin post-sun exposure. This paraben-free cream also contains allantoin, shea butter, and bisabolol to provide vital comfort and hydration to skin exposed to harsh environmental stressors."

ultraCeuticals.com/us

