

Bali Spas

A RETURN TO TIME-HONORED TRADITIONS

By Rada K. Tierney, Contributing Editor



The magic of Bali was first introduced to Western society in the 1948 musical classic, *South Pacific*. This remote Indonesian island in Southeast Asia served as the picturesque setting for a fictitious World War II romance. What many may be surprised to learn is that Bali is much more than a tiny tropical haven for romance. It has also earned the reputation as the spa capital of Asia, and for good reason. The island has a long and rich history of natural healing and beauty practices which dates back to the 15th century. The combination of ancient therapies brought to the island by Javanese rulers and healing treatments introduced by nomadic Hindus from

India have stood the test of time and continue to play an integral role in Indonesian healthcare.

WELLNESS & BEAUTY PHILOSOPHY

Among these time-honored traditions are two key components which distinguish Bali's wellness and beauty philosophy from Western practices. The first component is the unwavering use of proven botanical ingredients for treatments. Rather than seek out the latest trendy

natural or synthetic ingredients with short-term consumer appeal, the Bali spa industry adheres to proven ingredients indigenous to the island, including organically grown plants such as jamu from the ginger family, spices such as turmeric and cinnamon, and local herbs with

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medicinal properties which have contributed to the health and well being of the Balinese for centuries.

ROYAL LULUR

Turmeric, a golden hued spice synonymous with Indian cooking, is one of the most prominent ingredients found in the Balinese skin care repertoire and most commonly used in a highly popular skin treatment known

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as Royal Lulur. This ancient beauty ritual has been passed down from Javanese royalty and is still used today by the Balinese as a means to purify and calm the skin, as well as give it a radiant glow.

In recent years Western scientists have been increasingly interested in the therapeutic benefits of turmeric. A 2005 Wall Street Journal article reported that research activity into curcumin, the active ingredient in turmeric, is on a steady incline. Last year more than 250 research papers on curcumin's medicinal benefits were published in numerous medical journals and nutrition publications. The growing interest has spiked turmeric supplement sales and prompted the National Institutes of Health to launch four clinical trials on the effect of curcumin in the treatment of pancreatic cancer, multiple myeloma, Alzheimer's, and colorectal cancer.

The spice is also under close examination for its topical benefits to

psoriasis sufferers and for its anti-cancer properties against melanoma. A government-funded study in Thailand is examining other extracts found in turmeric for antioxidant and skin lightening properties and as an anti-inflammatory agent for use in cosmetics.

THE HEALING SEA

Bali's close proximity to the Indian Ocean also makes it a natural choice to incorporate the use of thalasso

therapy, or the use of seawater and all its parts into spa treatments. According to Michi Sonoda, Director

of the Ritz Carlton Bali Thalasso and Spa in Jimbaran Bay, the Balinese have made seawater an inherent element to their well-being. "The skin is the largest organ of the body with an exchange barrier capable of both absorption and excretion," says Sonoda. "It is an established scientific fact that ions from seawater are absorbed into the bloodstream and circulated throughout the body to produce healthier skin and boost the vigor of the heart, muscles, and respiratory system. Thalasso therapy affords these physical benefits as well as a sense of deep relaxation and a feeling of peace and rejuvenation."



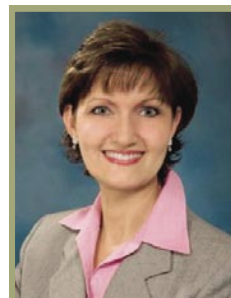


HOLISTIC APPROACH

The second component which distinguishes Bali's wellness and beauty philosophy from Western Practices is in the execution of aesthetic treatments. Brian Hathaway, Director of Spas for the Four Seasons resorts in Jimbaran Bay and Sayan, says that unlike the growing trend in the U.S. towards a spa menu offering more invasive "quick fix" cosmetic treatments such as Botox® injections, liposuction, and chemical peels, the Balinese spa industry prefers a high touch over a high tech approach. "I believe that in Asia it is important to maintain the holistic approach which is so ingrained in the Eastern spirit of healing," says

Hathaway, " and allow the warmth and the spirituality of touch from the heart to come through the hands rather than leave guests feeling they have been processed through a machine." He predicts that with the growing popularity of alternative medicine, the spa industry pendulum will swing back to basics with greater emphasis on naturopathic, homeopathic, and ayurvedic treatments being offered on the menu.

The loyal adherence to administering treatments such as massage in the traditional Bali method has set the standard in the spa industry and continues to attract visitors from around the world to the Balinese spa experience.



Rada Tierney has spent her career shining the spotlight on others. Before launching her consulting

firm, RKT Communications, Rada directed public relations for Physician's Choice of Arizona, and for Alpern Lehman, a medical marketing agency. Rada began her career in broadcasting and has won several awards, including three Emmys, for her medical reports.