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BEAUTY

Amala: A Natural Beauty from Bavaria

BECCA HENSLEY

Berries. Macadamia nuts. Avocado. White tea. Figs. The list of product ingredients reads like a farmer's market wish list. Amala, a Natrue-certified, results-oriented skincare line, makes their creams and elixirs in a tiny mountain-ensconced Bavarian hamlet. A carbon-neutral, state-of-the-art lab, surrounded by gardens and enclosed in panoramic windows and sun-dappled walls, is the home for this restorative and proactive collection of plant-powered skincare products.

Scientists imbued with the artisanal spirit make small-batch quantities, which address every type of skin concern—from soothing to brightening to rejuvenating. With a commitment to using the whole plant and distilling its powers, Amala continues to research indigenous wellness rituals to formulate their highly concentrated blends. With specific farmer partners across the world, it sources only from those it knows best—blue lotus is collected from India and lavender from France. From Peru come the cocoa beans, while jasmine is harvested from Egypt. Astounding results confirmed by third-party clinical studies explain why up-market spas, such as the Dolder Grand Zurich and the Four Seasons Chicago, use Amala.

A green company, with a deeply entrenched conscience, Amala uses sustainable outer packaging and containers that are specially designed to naturally protect and preserve the effectiveness of the plant essences. "When it comes to skincare, one shouldn't have to sacrifice results for responsibility," says founder, Ute Leube, her skin glowing.

We met up with Ute Leube at Amala's laboratory in Bavaria to ask a few questions.

You have said, "Nature can give you anything and everything you need." When did you

first discover that nature was so full of possibilities? And, can you provide some examples about how Amala uses nature in its products?

I discovered this in the early 1970's, when I began studying health, nutrition, and alternative medicine. We use what plants offer us, and should not try adding anything synthetic to make them 'better.' When people do something to disturb the natural order, the result can actually be harming. The wisdom of nature is perfect, so we should not alter it. When we look around, we can discover we truly have everything we need in nature.

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We want to formulate with ingredients that are as close to nature as possible. Therefore, we distill and extract our natural ingredients in the manner that is best for the plant and will deliver the most potent yield. For example, our organic carrier oils, such as almond and jojoba are cold-pressed, extra-virgin oils that retain all the vitamins and minerals essential for the skin. The oils are food-grade and could be easily integrated into a gourmet kitchen.

One of our guiding principles is that the highest quality ingredients will deliver the highest skin efficacy. This is why we trust our ingredient distillation and extraction to experienced **specialists who are intimately familiar with the composition of each plant—they give us their secrets and we pass on the extraordinary results in our products.**

You have a cadre of farm partners from around the world. How did you make these relationships, and how do you sustain them?

We started with Mediterranean countries and went to the Chamber of Commerce to ask who did organic farming. We looked to the areas where we knew we wanted to get our ingredients from, and they helped us to find organic farmers, or those who had a farm already, and who were willing to change from conventional to organic farming.

Our organic plant actives are sourced from trusted fair-trade farm partners and include cocoa bean from Peru, narcissus and myrtle from Turkey, jasmine from Egypt, blue lotus from India, and desert fig from Morocco. Traditional beauty rituals from all over the world are our inspiration. We seek powerful, indigenous plant actives with targeted and effective skin benefits. For example, we tap into centuries-old beauty wisdom from the Amazon when selecting our anti-aging ingredients.

Germany is known for being a place entrenched in herbal lore and natural healing. Did this influence you when you began Primavera, your aromatherapy brand, and Amala, your upscale spa brand?

No, not really. It's a good basis, since we are used to studying plants and alternative medicine, but I became interested in it when I was in the United States, in the 1970's, and saw what was happening with the holistic approach to healing. The whole person and their entire system—and always looking at the circle of life—are what intrigued me.

What made you wish to develop Amala as a spa brand?

When we were developing Amala, we saw an opportunity to create a truly naturalskincare line for five-star luxury spas that would deliver results using only the finest, most beneficial plant ingredients. Our goal was to raise the bar for proven efficacy and refined luxury in **the natural skincare market. We couldn't imagine developing anything other than authentic all-natural products.** Our bodies are inherently from nature and understand nature perfectly. Synthetic cosmetic ingredients do not fit our commitment to formulate only with ingredients that work in total harmony with the body. We strongly believe in the wisdom of nature. Nature provides everything we need for health, wellbeing, and beauty. Natural ingredients are powerful and their living actives nurture and strengthen the body in a holistic way. We know that a healthy body naturally looks its most vibrant and beautiful; this inspires us and is at the heart of our vision.

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You have won some significant awards, including the Visionary of the Year Award from the Green Spa Network and Veuve Clicquot's Entrepreneur of the Year. Why did they choose you?

I believe it is because our green/eco-conscious brand is different from the regular consumer brands. For both awards, I think we were chosen because of our sustainable background and practices, and for being pioneers in this space in Germany from the very beginning with organic farming practices for our brand.

Which Amala products are you currently using on your skin?

The products I absolutely cannot live without are: Advanced Firming Complex, Soothing Lip Salve, and Hydrating Yogurt Mask. They come with me wherever I go!

What is the first Amala product a consumer should use?

I recommend a face oil such as our Rejuvenating or Hydrating Treatment Oil. We are **specialists in oils, and it's our core competency. Facial oils are becoming much more** popular now in the U.S. People used to be very hesitant to use them because they feared it would make their skin oily, but are now understanding that organic plant seed oils will do the exact opposite! When you nourish the skin, it does not need to produce excessive oil. I also recommend our Hydrating Hand Cream or Soothing Lip Salve as wonderful introductory products.

What criteria do you employ when choosing the spas where Amala treatments will be offered?

Our partner spas must be five-star, and also must care about having a natural environment, be interested in natural and organic skincare and the benefits of the natural ingredients. They should care about having the perfect treatment that is both effective and natural. There is no need to choose between one or the other anymore. As a natural **brand, Amala's facials have clinically tested and proven results.**

If you were not doing this, what career path would you take?

I would have a small teashop where natural perfumes, Amala products, and beautiful unique pieces of jewelry are sold. It would be a place where friends could get together to chat over tea.

What is your advice to younger colleagues?

It is my personal mantra: Listen to your heart, listen to your inner voice, be authentic, and live your life as your own.

Favorite spa service?

The Rejuvenating Facial at Rancho La Puerta.

What's on the horizon?

We're **really excited about our new breakthrough skincare product planned for launch in 2015.** It will integrate groundbreaking natural ingredients to deliver clinically proven results. Of course, there will also be a spa facial treatment launched to complement the new product to create a full sensorial experience.



BECCA HENSLEY

Based in Austin, Becca Hensley writes regularly about travel and spas. She believes a good story draws you in like laughter in a crowded room, and challenges you to do it justice. Her work appears regularly in Austin Monthly, Travel Channel, Toronto Star and National Geographic Traveler.

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