

Saving our skin

THE BOOMING
NEW **NATURAL SKINCARE**
INDUSTRY IS BECOMING
INCREASINGLY SOPHISTICATED,
INVENTIVE, ARTISANAL,
RIGHTEOUS, HARD-SELLING,
AND ECO-INTELLIGENT—ALL
ARGUABLY BECAUSE OF ITS
LOCATION BY THE BAY.

BY JOANNE FURIO



OUR A-Z GUIDE TO BAY AREA
SKINCARE COMPANIES



Founded in Europe by Bryan Meehan, who recently established American headquarters in San Francisco, the thoroughly modern Nude line combines natural ingredients with the high performance and gorgeous packaging of luxury skincare brands.



CALL IT THE LOCAL LOTION REVOLUTION. Chances are that when you open your medicine cabinet, a bunch of the skincare products staring back at you come from companies based within an hour's drive.

The Bay Area is now the mecca for a new type of beauty industry: locally sourced, carefully crafted, and with a list of ingredients you can actually understand and feel good about slathering on your skin.

Bay Area beauty entrepreneurs have a long tradition of brewing creams and potions in their kitchens and backyards, but today's players are competing in the international marketplace with a level of sophistication rarely seen before. The latest addition is Nude, an upscale natural skincare line created by Bryan Meehan, an Irish eco-entrepreneur, with Ali Hewson, wife of U2 frontman Bono and head of the socially responsible clothing company Edun (an anagram for *nude*). After launching the line in London in 2007, Meehan recently moved his family to Belvedere and set up shop in a 2,000-square-foot office in San Francisco's financial district, in part to be closer to the North American headquarters of beauty powerhouse Sephora, his largest distributor. Nude is also sold at Barneys New York and at Whole Foods.

Meehan came up with the Nude concept after noticing that female customers at his Fresh & Wild grocery stores in the U.K. were bypassing the beauty aisle, instead opting for department-store brands loaded with the kinds of chemicals they avoided in their food. They didn't trust



SKINCARE AU NATUREL

An alphabetical guide to the Bay Area's natural bodycare players.

AFTELIER PERFUMES

Headquarters:
Berkeley

Claim to fame:
Bodycare products made using organic and wild ingredients, then botanically scented by a master perfumer with natural ingredients.

Bestseller: Chocolate & Saffron body oil, \$35/3.7 oz.

BARE ESSENTIALS

Headquarters:
San Francisco

Claim to fame:
Chemical-free, 100 percent mineral-based powder foundation.

Bestseller:
BareMinerals SPF 15 foundation, \$25/3 oz.

BENEDETTA

Headquarters:
Petaluma

Claim to fame: Small, artisanal label that uses organic and biodynamic ingredients in its body-care products.

Bestseller: The Eye Crème, \$65/5 fl. oz.

BODY TIME

Headquarters:
Berkeley

Claim to fame:
Botanically based bath and beauty line known for its pioneering practice of bottle refilling, as well as for its unscented and custom-scented formulas.

Bestseller: China Rain perfume oil, \$10.50/.25 fl. oz.

DEPTH

Headquarters:
Petaluma

Claim to fame: Natural products for bath and body formulated with marine botanicals and organic aloe vera.

Bestseller: Drench hydrating shampoo, \$9.99/10 fl. oz.

DUCHESS MARDEN

Headquarters:
Mill Valley

Claim to fame:
An antiaging line that began with roses and expanded to incorporate other plant-based essences.

Bestseller: Damascena antiwrinkle serum, \$58/1 fl. oz.

EDELBIO

Headquarters:
San Francisco

Claim to fame: Swiss-made mother-daughter line of products for skin and body.

Bestseller: All-in-One cleansing lotion, \$23.50/5.07 fl. oz.

80 ACRES

Headquarters:
Petaluma

Claim to fame:
Organic olive oil from the McEvoy Ranch forms the backbone of these skincare products.

Bestseller: Verde hand and body lotion, \$25/10 fl. oz.



From its crunchy-granola roots, natural bodycare has become a \$7.9 billion-a-year business in the United States alone. And the industry's epicenter is purely local: All the products shown in these pages were made by companies with Bay Area ties.



Many Bay Area skin-care brands are directly inspired by the region's obsession with the environment and food, taking a locavorelike approach to sourcing and manufacturing.





EO

Headquarters:
Corte Madera

Claim to fame: Natural and organic bath, body, hair, and sanitizing products with essential oils.

Bestseller: Organic Lavender hand-sanitizing spray, \$2.99/.33 fl. oz.

GALENS WAY

Headquarters:
Sebastopol

Claim to fame: Handcrafted facial and bodycare products based on botanical extracts.

Bestseller: A Riot of Roses rose cream, \$29.50/1 oz.

GRATEFUL BODY

Headquarters:
Berkeley

Claim to fame: Formulas created with whole-plant botanicals that address a variety of skin types and conditions.

Bestseller: Hydrating Cleanse, \$24.95/4 fl. oz.

GUNILLA SKIN ALCHEMY

Headquarters:
San Francisco

Claim to fame: Aesthetician's handmade argan-oil facial products for every skin type.

Bestseller: Rejuvenate facial oil, \$65/1 fl. oz.

IN FIORE

Headquarters:
San Francisco

Claim to fame: Artisanal, essential oil-based skin- and bodycare products inspired by old-world apothecaries.

Bestseller: Crème de Fleur face cream, \$150/1.67 oz.

INTERNATIONAL ORANGE

Headquarters:
San Francisco

Claim to fame: Handcrafted spa brand with products created from organic, wild, or biodynamic ingredients.

Bestseller: Enrich body cream, \$44/8 oz.

JOSIE MARAN

Headquarters: Los Angeles; founder hails from Menlo Park

Claim to fame: Argan-oil skincare and color cosmetics that reflect the model-founder's preference for natural ingredients.

Bestseller: Argan oil, \$48/1.7 fl. oz.

JUICE BEAUTY

Headquarters:
San Rafael

Claim to fame: Fruit juice-based organic skincare.

Bestseller: Full Strength Green Apple peel, \$45/2 fl. oz.

that natural skincare would deliver on its antiaging claims. Meehan's approach was to develop a beautifully packaged luxury skincare line with top-notch natural ingredients and "the high performance you'd expect from a Crème de la Mer."

With Nude's arrival, the Bay Area has solidified its reputation as the epicenter of the organic and natural beauty movement, currently estimated by *Nutrition Business Journal* to be worth more than \$7.9 billion in the United States alone. Almost 30 brands are based here, ranging from Oakland's \$20 million-a-year 100% Pure line to Yes to Inc., formerly of Tel Aviv, whose Yes to Carrots

THE BAY AREA'S RISE AS A BEAUTY CENTER IS CAUSING RIPPLES FROM NEW YORK TO PARIS.

products are sold at Target. "It definitely feels like a magnet," says Meehan, who chose the Bay Area because of its reputation for innovation, its association with health and well-being, and its obsession with food and nature. The ripples are being felt as far away as New York and Paris.

The Bay Area's roots in the natural skincare movement go back to at least 1970, when sisters-in-law Peggy Short and Jane Saunders were selling handmade soaps and perfumes out of a garage-bazaar in Berkeley. The bath and body industry hadn't even been invented yet, says Manda Heron, Short's daughter and CEO of Body Time, as the business is now known (it sold its original name, the Body Shop, to the iconic U.K.-based company in 1987). "There was really just Jergens lotion in grocery marts and perfumes and makeup in the department stores," Heron says.

In those days, natural food stores—the obvious outlet for

such products—didn't carry many, either (beauty was considered too bourgeois). "They were primarily interested in selling granola and yogurt," recalls Dennis T. Sepp, an organic chemist who founded the hair- and skincare company ShiKai in his Santa Barbara garage in 1971 and moved it to Santa Rosa a year later.

The vast growth of the natural beauty industry—and the Bay Area's emergence as a beauty center—came as Americans began to ask about their skincare products what they had already asked about their food: Where does it come from? How is it made? What are the ingredients, and are they safe? Around here, of course, people have been asking these questions

THE LIGHTBULB WENT ON, SAYS SUSIE WANG OF 100% PURE, WHEN SHE WAS FORMULATING A PRODUCT FOR A LEADING SKINCARE COMPANY AND SPILLED A VIAL OF CHEMICALS. THE FORMICA TABLETOP DISINTEGRATED.

for decades. "This has always been an area of conscious individuals and early adapters who are willing to take chances and want to be trailblazers," says Zem Joaquin, who evaluates skincare products for her San Francisco-based website ecofabulous.com.

The food connection is huge. Many Bay Area skincare companies have a locavore-like emphasis on ingredients, artisanal craftsmanship, and sustainable packaging. At Marie Veronique Organics, whose diminutive Berkeley lab is just steps from the busy Fourth Street shopping area, products are made in a kitchen using Pyrex measuring cups, whisks, and four KitchenAid blenders. Clients sometimes call founder Marie Veronique Nadeau—a former high school chemistry



KAHINA GIVING BEAUTY

Headquarters:
New York; founder hails from San Francisco

Claim to fame:
Sustainable skincare based on 100 percent organic argan oil sourced from women's cooperatives in Morocco.
Bestseller: Kahina serum, \$69/1 fl. oz.

LE SANCTUAIRE

Headquarters:
San Francisco
Claim to fame:
Essential oil-based skincare as part of individualized spa-based program.
Bestseller: L'Huile de Grace restorative moisturizer, \$62/1 fl. oz.

LOTUS MOON

Headquarters:
Alameda
Claim to fame: Plant-based and antiaging ingredients combined to help a range of skin conditions.
Bestseller: Acai Radiance Peptide elixir, \$89/1.7 fl. oz.

MARIE VERONIQUE ORGANICS

Headquarters:
Berkeley
Claim to fame: Use of natural and organic ingredients to fight aging and sun damage.
Bestseller: Moisturizing Face Screen + Light Tint SPF 30, \$45/2 oz.

NANCY BOY

Headquarters:
San Francisco
Claim to fame:
Natural and organic unisex bodycare products scented with essential oils.
Bestseller: Signature shave cream, \$18/6 oz.

NOODLE & BOO

Headquarters:
Campbell
Claim to fame:
Top-to-bottom babies' and children's line of products for sensitive skin that has segued into maternity products.
Bestseller: Super Soft lotion, \$14/8 fl. oz.

NUDE

U.S. headquarters:
San Francisco
Claim to fame:
Natural skincare line that makes use of pre- and probiotics in its antiaging formulas.
Bestseller: Miracle mask, \$62/1.4 fl. oz.

OLIVINA

Headquarters:
Napa
Claim to fame:
Bodycare products made from such Napa staples as olive oil, grapeseed oil, and Meyer lemons.
Bestseller: Classic Olive body butter, \$27.50/8 oz.





The Bay Area's strategic location at the crossroads of online retailing and Asian trade bodes well for its future as a natural beauty mecca.

75 YEARS OF LOOKING FORWARD

SFMOMA marks its 75th anniversary with a series of exhibitions and events that tell the stories of the artists and cultural visionaries who put the museum on the map. Join us for a yearlong celebration of the art and artists of our time.

MARCH EVENTS

FILM SERIES

75 Years in the Dark: A Partial History of Film at SFMOMA
Thursdays, March 11 and 18, April 1, 7 p.m.

Guest curator Steve Anker showcases the films presented at SFMOMA between 1967 and 1978 by filmmakers as diverse as Luis Buñuel, Alfred Hitchcock, and Bruce Conner.

\$5 general; free for SFMOMA members or with museum admission.

SFMOMA: NOW PLAYING

A BRAND NEW SERIES OF THURSDAY NIGHT HAPPENINGS!

Announcing new Thursday night events where we invite artists to animate the museum in unexpected ways—and audiences to see SFMOMA in a different light. Evenings include hors d'oeuvres and a cash bar.

My Barbarian

Thursday, March 18, 6–9:45 p.m.

L.A.-based band My Barbarian mixes history, myth, and politics to create flamboyant performance work. Tonight they play in the museum's atrium and we screen works by Bruce Conner, Cory Arcangel, Christian Marclay, and others.

Free with museum admission.

Come play. Learn more at sfmoma.org/nowplaying.

Members enjoy free admission and express entry. Join today!



Evelyn D. Haas
EXHIBITION FUND

PROMOTIONAL SUPPORT



MEDIA SPONSORS



San Francisco Chronicle | SFGate.com

San Francisco
magazine

75 Years of Looking Forward is a series of exhibitions and events organized in celebration of SFMOMA's 75th anniversary. Major support is provided by the Koret Foundation, the Mimi and Peter Haas Fund, and the Evelyn D. Haas Exhibition Fund. Generous support is provided by the Bernard and Barbro Osher Exhibition Fund. Additional support is provided by the George Frederick Jewett Foundation, Kate and Wesley Mitchell, and The Black Dog Private Foundation. Promotional support is provided by Gap. Media sponsors: KGO-TV, The San Francisco Chronicle|SFGate.com, and San Francisco magazine. The St. Regis San Francisco is the official hotel of the 75th anniversary.

SFMOMA

sfmoma.org/anniversary

teacher—the “Alice Waters of skincare.”

A number of local entrepreneurs actually started in the food business. McEvoy Ranch, for example, crossed over last summer, using its renowned Petaluma-grown organic olive oil in a line of skincare products called 80 Acres. Susan Kenward was a James Beard–award-winning cookbook author before starting a line of olive- and grapeseed-oil-based skincare called Olivina in Napa in 2002 (she added a Meyer lemon collection last year). Pioneering natural perfumer Mandy Aftel of Berkeley, who recently added skincare and bath products to her line, has worked with Michael Mina and chefs at the French Laundry.

Reinforcing the culinary link, Petaluma-based Benedetta is the only skincare company with its own space in the food-oriented Ferry Building Marketplace in San Francisco. Founder Julia Faller, an aesthetician, describes the line as “food for the skin.” Meanwhile, Juice Beauty CEO Karen Behnke claims you could “literally eat” her San Rafael–based company’s new line of organic products “if you wanted to.” (They have been certified by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.)

As anyone in the food business knows, natural doesn’t come cheap: Julie Elliott, of the upscale line In Fiore, estimates that organic ingredients cost 40 percent more than synthetic ones. And despite the desire for local ingredients, most companies can’t rely on them alone. Le Sanctuaire, for example, uses lavender from Sonoma but

gets its *sangre de drago*—“the most powerful antioxidant on the planet,” essential to its \$62-an-ounce moisturizer—from the sap of an Amazonian rainforest tree, says aesthetician and company founder Rebecca Whitworth.

Even so, these companies’ wares are much more sustainable than the products from New York and abroad that dominate the \$300 billion-a-year global beauty market. Susan Griffin-Black, cofounder and co-CEO of the \$10 million-a-year brand EO—titles she shares with her now ex-husband, Brad Black—launched the company out of a Potrero Hill garage 15 years ago, after importing an upscale British label called Neal’s Yard in the early ’90s. “We were schlepping glass bottles halfway around the world, and it wasn’t making sense ecologically or from a brand-building perspective,” she says. To educate herself, Griffin-Black, a former Esprit designer, took a crash course in cosmetic chemistry at UCLA, supplemented by aromatherapy and herbal studies.

These days, EO—the name is a nod to the essential oils that inspired the brand—operates out of a nondescript, 23,000-square-foot facility in Corte Madera that serves as its factory, warehouse, and headquarters. Its 400 products, which include a bestselling lavender sanitizing gel, are made onsite. Being able to manufacture locally is a major attraction for many Bay Area companies, whose owners see it as part of a hands-on, holistic approach that allows them to stay close to

THE LARGER THE ASIAN MARKET GROWS, THE SCARCER NATURAL INGREDIENTS WILL BECOME—AND THE MORE PRESSURE SMALL COMPANIES WILL FEEL TO REDUCE QUALITY OR TO SELL OUT TO CONGLOMERATES.



SKINCARE AU NATUREL

CONTINUED

100% PURE

Headquarters: [Oakland](#)
Claim to fame: Fruit- and vegetable-based skincare and fruit-pigmented cosmetics created by the founder's patented processes.
Bestseller: Organic Coffee Bean eye cream, \$19/1 oz.

ORGANIC APOTEKE

U.S. headquarters: [Petaluma](#)
Claim to fame: British import with antiaging and clarifying formulas.
Bestseller: Rejuvenating face cream, \$45/1.7 fl. oz.

SHIKAI

Headquarters: [Santa Rosa](#)
Claim to fame: Plant-based products that started with a shampoo made from an extract of shikakai, a fruit from a South Asian tree.
Bestseller: Borage Dry Skin Therapy lotion, \$13.99/8 fl. oz.

TEENS TURNING GREEN

Headquarters: [Sausalito](#)
Claim to fame: Eco-bodycare products created by teen activists.
Bestseller: Depth Sea Foam facial cleanser, \$6.99/4 fl. oz.

TWEEN BEAUTY

Headquarters: [Fairfax](#)
Claim to fame: Natural, organic, and biodegradable bodycare products with the sweet fragrances preferred by preteens.
Bestseller: Orange Sherbet shampoo, \$7.49/8 fl. oz.

YES TO INC.

Headquarters: [San Francisco](#)
Claim to fame: Bodycare products that include organic, plant-based ingredients and Dead Sea minerals.
Bestseller: Yes to Carrots Deliciously Rich body butter, \$12.99/8.45 fl. oz.



b a b e t t e



WWW.BABETTESF.COM 361 SUTTER STREET, SAN FRANCISCO

PRODUCTS USED
BY CHILDREN ARE A
KEY FOCUS, SINCE, AS
RIZZO POINTS OUT,
“BREAST CANCER
DOESN'T START AT
49—IT CAN HAVE ITS
ROOTS IN UTERO,
IN EARLY LIFE,
AND IN PUBERTY.”

their products and exercise better quality control. “If we are about product, how can we not manufacture here?” Black asks. Given the mind-boggling cost of Bay Area real estate, it’s also a sign of how committed many skincare entrepreneurs remain to the local lifestyle and values. “If your goal is to make as much money as possible,” Griffin-Black says, “Marin isn’t the best place to manufacture.”

The Bay Area’s spot on the map offers other important benefits, however. One of the largest cosmetics retailers in the world, Sephora, moved closer to Silicon Valley’s online technology, establishing headquarters in San Francisco in 1997. Nude’s Meehan, meanwhile, wanted to be closer both to Sephora and to the exploding marketplace in Asia. Indeed, thanks to the Bay Area’s strategic location at the crossroads of technology and trade, its dominance of the

natural beauty sector is only likely to grow.

But there’s another huge reason that all these companies are putting down Bay Area roots, says Stacy Malkan, an investigative journalist and author of *Not Just a Pretty Face: The Ugly Side of the Beauty Industry* (New Society, 2007). She is also the cofounder of the San Francisco-based Campaign for Safe Cosmetics (CSC) and calls the Bay Area “absolutely ground zero for activism”—specifically, the kind of environmental-safety activism that inspires creative do-gooders to dream up these companies and attracts more and more women to the products they produce.

The current natural beauty craze was kick-started in 2002, when three activist organizations based elsewhere—Health Care Without Harm, Environmental Working Group, and

Women’s Voices for the Earth—joined forces to discover why disproportionate numbers of women had been found to have phthalates (industrial chemicals mostly used to manufacture plastics but also used in cosmetics to help fragrances adhere to the body) in their systems. The groups’ testing discovered phthalates—which are increasingly thought to cause developmental and reproductive defects—in 70 percent of women’s beauty products. To raise public awareness, the groups began the series of controversial ads that would become their signature, including one that ran in the *New York Times* depicting a pregnant woman with a bottle of Christian Dior’s Poison perfume. It read: “Sexy for her. For baby, it could really be poison.” (One result of all these efforts: As of January 2009, California has banned phthalates in baby products.)

Find your **one-in-a-million**
without dating a million.



Meeting people is easy.

It’s meeting the right person
that’s the challenge.

At Elite Personal Search, the
nation’s premier matchmaker,
we meet with you one-on-one
to find out who you are and
introduce you to the one
you’ve been looking for.

Contact us today and start
meeting the people you want –
and deserve – to meet.

EliteTM
PERSONAL SEARCH
get serious about getting serious

elitepersonalsearch.com
800.411.3327

LOS ANGELES WASHINGTON DC BOSTON DENVER DALLAS HOUSTON PHOENIX PALM SPRINGS ORANGE COUNTY SAN FRANCISCO SAN DIEGO

Inspired by their success, the activists decided to create the Campaign for Safe Cosmetics, and turned to the San Francisco-based Breast Cancer Fund to host it. The powerful fund, the only national organization devoted solely to exploring the environmental causes of breast cancer, has also helped push laws banning toxic chemicals from toys and was instrumental in the 2003 passage of San Francisco's pioneering Precautionary Principle ordinance, which requires the city, when making any decision, to choose the alternative that poses the least potential threat to health or the environment. Together, the CSC and the fund began to argue that cosmetics were a powerful teaching tool about the reach of toxic chemicals in our lives.

"Look at the marketing that's done around cosmetics and breast cancer—everything has

a pink ribbon on it," says the fund's CEO and president, Jeanne Rizzo. "Personal-care products were the most perfect way to educate the public to bring attention to products whose long-term impact has never been studied."

Products used by children are a key focus, since, as Rizzo points out, "breast cancer doesn't start at the age of 49—it can have its roots in utero, in early life, and in puberty." One shocking report found the chemicals formaldehyde and 1,4-dioxane, both probable carcinogens, in 17 baby products (61 percent of those tested), including Johnson's baby shampoo.

In 2005, the fund became a sponsor of the California Safe Cosmetics Act, which requires cosmetics companies to disclose to the state if their products contain ingredients linked to cancer or birth defects. Often

working together, the CSC and the Breast Cancer Fund have also prodded the beauty industry to clean up its act: prompting nail polish manufacturer OPI to remove dibutyl phthalate (DBP), a reproductive toxin, from its American products; exposing the existence of lead in 61 percent of lipstick brands tested; and nudging Whole Foods to ban 300 ingredients from more than 2,500 body products and cosmetics sold in its stores. The CSC is now working with Congress to adopt stricter standards on cosmetics and to overhaul federal regulation of personal-care products.

Local skincare entrepreneurs owe much of their success to similar thinking. Karine Wittmer's worries about her facial cream, which her two-year-old daughter wanted to dab on her own cheeks in copycat fashion, led her to create Edelbio, a skincare line based on the

Sotheby's

INTERNATIONAL REALTY

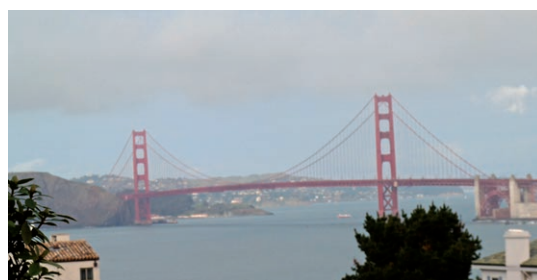


SAN FRANCISCO / WINE COUNTRY PROPERTIES

Local Experts Worldwide



SAN FRANCISCO, CA Luxurious, Sustainable Paradise Atop Pacific Heights: Exquisitely re-imagined "green" home with unparalleled views. \$14,000,000. WEB: SFM0084430. Val Steele, 415.772.8400



SEA CLIFF, CA Golden Gate View Home: Elegant Mediterranean with 4+ bedrooms, 3.5 baths, social + au-pair rooms. Garage. Price by request. WEB: SF0084602. Janet F. Schindler, 415.265.5994



SAN FRANCISCO, CA Classic Edwardian Home: Spacious light-filled home with six bedrooms plus sunroom. \$1,700,000. WEB: SFM0084573. Val Steele, 415.772.8400



NAPA, CA Panoramic Western Vineyard Views: ± 12 acre East Napa estate home with vineyard and winery potential. The Wine Country retreat. \$1,695,000. WEB: SFM0242910. Robert Pursell, 707.299.9191



SAN FRANCISCO, CA Stunning Remodeled Noe Valley View Craftsman: 3 bedrooms, 2 baths, gorgeous kitchen, formal dining room, yard. Price upon request. WEB: SF0084607. Linda S. Gordon, 415.602.1471



SAN FRANCISCO, CA Marina Palace: Views in prime location. 1 bedroom, 1 bath, upper deck terrace, garage. Penthouse also available. \$799,000-\$1,049,000. WEB: SFM0084585. Missy Echeverria, 415.716.7340

Sustainable Beauty

Awarded Top Medical Spa
by DAYSPA Magazine for 2010

San Francisco's first Silver LEED® certified medical spa, **Epi Center MedSpa** combines innovative medical technology and products with luxurious organic ingredients for the ultimate experience. As always, **Consultations are Free... Results Priceless!**

Visit our web site for a
\$25 gift certificate!

Our Services Offered:

- IPL PhotoFacialSM
- Laser Hair Removal
- BOTOX® Cosmetic
- Restylane® & Perlane®
- Juvéderm®
- Facial and Body Waxing
- Organic and Clinical Facials
- Fractional Laser Resurfacing
- Leg Vein Treatments for Spider Veins

Scott W Mosser, MD
Board Certified Plastic Surgeon

Jennifer Fick, RN, BSN
Director of Clinical Operations

450 Sutter Street, Suite #800
San Francisco, California 94108

415.362.4754

www.skinrejuv.com

epi center
Med Spa

edelweiss flower. Susie Wang was working as a formulator for one of the largest skincare companies in the world when she accidentally spilled a vial of the petrochemical polyethylene glycol, which is commonly used to add viscosity and thickness to products. Unable to clean it up right away, she later found that it had disintegrated the Formica tabletop. "That's when the lightbulb went on," she says. The company Wang founded in her Napa greenhouse, 100% Pure, now occupies some 30,000 square feet in Oakland, and Wang has become an industry legend for figuring out how to stabilize vitamin C, treasured for its antioxidant properties. Her latest patented technique involves cosmetics colored with fruit and vegetable pigments.

As customer demand explodes, larger companies are becoming nature lovers, too. The pioneering brands Avalon Organics and Alba Botanica, both formerly of Petaluma, were bought in 2007 for \$120 million by Hain Celestial, a natural-foods powerhouse based in New York that owns four dozen lines, including Celestial Seasonings. Burt's Bees, purchased by Oakland-based Clorox for \$925 million in 2007, now sells its products at Wal-Mart. Juice Beauty's Behnke fields a couple of calls a week from prospective buyers and investors, and EO is considering a proposal from Target to bring select items to the store's shelves. "It's the same thinking that we had when organic and natural food incubated into the larger companies," explains Scott Elaine Case, managing partner of VMG Partners, a San Francisco private equity firm that invests in body products. "The same has been happening and will continue to happen in personal care."

But other companies remain committed to the idea that small is beautiful. "Whenever you go

big, you lose quality," says Body Time's Heron, whose empire consists of just three stores in the East Bay and one in San Anselmo. "It's the same with food. Could you imagine Chez Panisses all over the country?"

An indicator that the field has become increasingly cut-throat is the tendency among some companies to point out their competitors' inadequacies, especially those that involve ingredients. (One recent example: a lawsuit by a personal-care brand claiming that other well-known companies' products aren't really organic.) And In Fiore's Julie Elliott fears that the emergence of bigger conglomerates may stamp out boutique firms like hers with their massive buying power. She first noticed the threat this past fall, when she struggled for several weeks to obtain boronia oil, a flower-derived ingredient—but the product it was intended for never launched, because her New Zealand supplier had sold its entire lot to one, much bigger company. "In this kind of work," she says, "your resources are really your best-kept secret."

The larger the Asian market grows, the scarcer ingredients will become—and the more pressure small companies will feel to reduce quality or to sell out to conglomerates. But Meehan, for one, isn't daunted by these challenges. He envisions that Nude will gain international fame and cachet without sacrificing its quality. "It takes time to build a brand," he says. "If it takes 10 years for Nude to become a household name, I'm fine with that. I'm not going away." ■

JOANNE FURIO IS A SAN FRANCISCO CONTRIBUTING WRITER.

Jumpstart Your Weight Loss

Lose 15 to 60 pounds in 12 weeks!

Physician-Supervised Weight Loss • Dietary Guidance
Safe and Effective Medication • Long Term Weight Management

jumpstart
MEDICINE

San Francisco
126 Post Street, Suite 618
415.438.4999

San Francisco
390 Laurel Street, Suite 207
415.438.4999

Walnut Creek
710 S. Broadway, Suite 110
925.287.8777

Mountain View
465 Fairchild Drive, Suite 112
650.396.8080

Redwood City
595 Price Avenue, Second Floor
650.701.1460

Additional Locations
Millbrae, San Jose,
and San Ramon

www.jumpstartmedicine.com