

LIFT OFF

THE MUCH-MALIGNED, ONCE-TERRIFYING CHEMICAL PEEL MAY JUST BE THE BEST THING YOU CAN DO FOR YOUR SKIN.



THE BIG REVEAL
CHEMICAL PEELS HELP UNCOVER SMOOTHNESS, EVEN TONE, AND YOUTHFUL LUMINOSITY. PHOTOGRAPHED BY GRANT CORNETT.

Let us dispense with the scary part first: Chemical peels—dermatologic treatments once as maligned as electroshock therapy—no longer must leave the face red, raw, and flaking. Dermatologists have revised their thinking, shifting from the guns-blazing approach to more moderate tactics by turning down the intensity on these acid-based superexfoliants. The latest cocktails—now de facto elements of most dermatology visits, facials, and savvy home regimens—have yielded

gentle peels for virtually every skin type and issue: Have sun damage or discoloration? There's a peel for that. Bothered by fine lines? Or just dull skin? Get a peel. Is acne a problem? A peel will help.

In the early days, it was believed that the more aggressive the treatment, the better the result, and as such, peels were chiefly composed of monster-strength percentages of single acids—recall the phenol peels of the 1990s—designed to dramatically resurface skin. A sunburn-like appearance,

followed by several uncomfortable, itchy, skin-shedding days (most often spent in hiding) generally followed. The new thinking trades the no-pain-no-gain mentality for the more palatable slow-and-steady-wins-the-race: Combinations of multiple exfoliating acids in lower strengths encourage the skin to shed its top layers, along with dead, complexion-clogging surface cells and impurities. Some peels, like the fruit-enzyme variety, don't contain any acids at all. The new peels are kinder, gentler versions of their fearsome predecessors, designed to leave skin glowing, instead of flaking.

"I always say, 'You don't have to peel with a peel,'" says dermatologist Jennifer Linder, M.D. At her Scottsdale, Arizona, practice, Linder (also the chief scientific officer for the clinical line PCA Skin) regularly uses peels to achieve everything from lightening hyperpigmentation (bringing the brown pigment in discolorations like sun spots to the surface and eventually "lifting" it off through exfoliation) to addressing fine lines. She'll even add a retinol-based peel on top of another peel as a booster to trigger increased cell turnover and skin-plumping collagen production. After PCA's Ultra Peel I, which she recommends her patients receive on a regular basis, "the skin takes on this lovely glow and looks more even," she says. When they're done with enough frequency, "you can get to the same end points with peels as you can with lasers," she claims.

AHAs (alpha-hydroxy acids) like glycolic and citric acids brighten dull skin, reduce fine lines, and decrease sun damage, while lactic acid, derived from milk, helps hydrate. BHAs (beta-hydroxy acids), like salicylic acid, help eradicate acne by cleansing pores, killing bacteria, and reducing inflammation. Linder depends on more intense TCA (trichloroacetic acid) for spot treatment, like acne scarring. *beauty >210*

BEAUTY

SKIN

Peels aren't limited to the face, either. "I love a TCA hand peel," says New York dermatologist Erin Gilbert, M.D. "That's an area we don't really think about, but where you have a lot of sun damage."

Jordana Mattioli, the sought-after facialist in Manhattan plastic surgeon Adam Kolker, M.D.'s, office, has 30 different peels up her sleeve. Many of her concoctions are so gentle, she'll use them on a bride the day before her wedding (the 30 percent lactic or glycolic acids, applied for two minutes) to moisturize and brighten dull skin. Or, on the day of the wedding, she'll do a lightly exfoliating enzyme peel for added smoothness. Formulations that include calming agents like green tea, licorice, and meadowsweet extract are particularly good for clients with redness, inflammation, or rosacea. "Everybody gets a peel," says Mattioli. "If you can customize something to someone's skin type, why not do it?"

Beyond the luminous, near-instant gratification achieved by so many peels,

another reason to incorporate one into a regular regimen: They help pave the way for daily skin care to perform better by removing the dead surface cells that may be impeding its absorption. Gilbert describes it as if the cells were

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tiles, with peels dissolving the grout in between them: "It's just loosening the top layers of your skin and allowing them to lift off," she says.

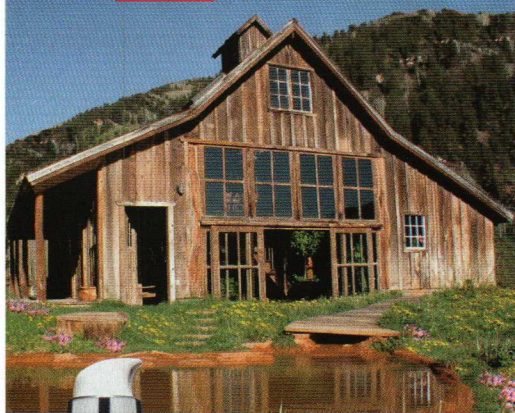
While the deeper, more aggressive peels still exist and are performed by doctors in-office for more dramatic resurfacing results, New York

dermatologist Dennis Gross, M.D., feels "you're better off maintaining a gentle regime on a regular basis than you are doing something extreme once in a while." Gross revolutionized the home skin-care market in 2001 when he introduced his Alpha Beta Daily Face Peels, which promised to treat everything from fine lines, enlarged pores, and blemishes to dark spots, all with added clarity and without any ensuing redness. Now there are dozens of home options, like Philosophy's Detoxify oxygen peel, Bliss's glycolic That's Incredi-Peel, and Kate Somerville's Clinic-to-Go Resurfacing Peel Pads, inspired by AHA-based treatments at her Los Angeles medi-spa.

"Peels are the one thing that every dermatologist can do to help their patients age gracefully," says Linder. "The experience is much like getting a facial, but you get more out of it. You're actually doing something to change the long-term health of the skin." Plus, she adds, "It's such an easy thing to do."

—KAYLEEN SCHAEFER *beauty* >212

SPA



NOT SO WILD WEST

Put down the matches and leave the map at home: At Cresto Ranch, opening next month in southwestern Colorado, the only survival skill one needs is the ability to book a massage. Just down the road from Dunton Hot Springs—the legendarily chic wilderness getaway set in a former ghost town—this brand-new sister retreat features eight lavish, safari-inspired tents (as opposed to Dunton's twelve log cabins) nestled in an alpine clearing in the Rockies. At the spa tent, the Mountain Glow body scrub and Dunton Hot River Rock Massage (with stones gathered from a nearby river) are particularly welcome after a day of horseback-riding, fly-fishing, kayaking, or just soaking in the natural springs. —DEANNA PAI

\$1,400 PER NIGHT; (877) 228-4674.

BACK AT THE RANCH

CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE: THE BATHHOUSE AT DUNTON HOT SPRINGS; A HIKING TRAIL AT CRESTO RANCH; REN MOROCCAN ROSE BODY OIL, USED IN MESSAGES AT THE SPA.

