

From nature



The world of 'cosmeceuticals' is bewildering. We dissect the science and tell you whether these products live up to their claims

Karen Dover, who owns a laser and cosmetic medicine clinic on Carling Avenue, carries a line of anti-aging creams by Riversol (right).

By Julie Beun

Coffee berry to smooth your skin. Maple syrup to rehydrate. And a splash of red cedar to diminish fine lines.

It may sound like the makings of dessert, but since the introduction of alpha and beta hydroxyl acids, it seems anti-aging products have left the lab and taken a leaf straight from Mother Nature's book. Typically found in "cosmeceuticals" aimed at smoothing fine lines, diminishing age spots and firming skin whose underlying collagen has lost elasticity, elements from nature are feeding an explosion of anti-aging formulations hitting the market, says Ben >>

Kaminsky, a leading Canadian chemist, author of *Beyond Botox* and founder of the high-end B. Kamins, Chemist line of skin care products.

"There are more cosmeceuticals than ever. It's almost bewildering," he says. "Yet the market for these products is not really growing quickly despite that. It is being fuelled by entrepreneurial physicians and by a renewed focus on naturally occurring compounds that can be synergized into a product."

Yet according to Kaminsky, who developed his Bio-Maple compound after discovering the humectant and moisturizing properties of maple sap 40 years ago, the label "natural" is no guarantee of safety. In his Montreal lab, for example, they quarantine and analyse every natural ingredient for heavy metals and other contaminants before it can be used. "They come from all over the world and from countries where the use of insecticides is not banned, so there are fewer controls."

Also problematic, he says, is the public's perception that "natural" equates to "healthy."

"There is a lot of anecdotal knowledge associated with holistic preparations, but rarely is there any valid clinical data. People feel they're natur-

al and they buy into them. I'm not saying all natural things are bad, but in the context of good, well-researched skin care treatments, they're just one element."

In fact, adds Ottawa doctor and cosmetic skincare specialist Karen Dover, just read the back of any reputable skincare product with natural antecedents. "There is a whole range of elements that go into a good product. Many have antioxidants to fight wrinkle-causing free radicals caused by smoking, sun, diet and pollution, but some of those are not entirely effective. We're finding that nature does supply us with antioxidants to protect from free radical damage, and we've found ways to extract them, but they have to be handled correctly. In Riversol products, for example, there's a stable form of vitamin C that is the only one that does not oxidize the minute you open the package or put it on your skin."

But buying a product is just the first step, she adds: "The number one thing is to cleanse, treat and protect. Within a few minutes of washing, add your moisturizer and a good SPF. The more skin ages, the more it takes to reverse the changes and protect against sun damage."

THUJAPLICIN (RIVERSOL)

An ingredient in the Pacific Red Cedar, thujaplicin is a powerful antifungal and antibacterial first discovered in the 1930s that is now used in combination with a stable form of vitamin C and E by a small B.C.-based skincare company, Riversol. Although a relatively small player, Riversol is making big news with its line of foaming cleanser, serum, night cream and eye cream, developed by dermatologist and former University of British Columbia professor, Jason Rivers. Although he intended it for patients with sensitive skin, the product also turned out to be a blockbuster combination to moisturize and reduce the appearance of fine lines and wrinkles. Prices range from \$35 for cleansers to \$105 for the serum. Available exclusively in Ottawa through Karen Dover at (613) 715-9900 or through www.riversol.com

RESVERATROL (ESTÉE LAUDER)

Although resveratrol is best known as an antioxidant in red wine and grape juice, it is also found in Japanese knotweed at 40 times the potency of that in your basic shiraz. Recommended as a dietary supplement by renowned anti-aging expert Michael Roizen, founder of RealAge and co-author of *You: On a Diet*, resveratrol extract is also used topically to combat the worst signs of aging skin. "If you have free radicals on your skin, they will prematurely age skin with fine lines, age spots and deeper wrinkles," says Kaminsky. "Resveratrol will neutralize free radicals and stop those actions. The antioxidant effect works very rapidly." Available at Holt Renfrew in Estée Lauder's Re-Nutriv Ultimate Youth Eye Creme, which uses a stabilized resveratrol molecule to deliver deeper benefits for longer. Available at Holt Renfrew. \$175 for 15 mL. >>

