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Stories of Success...

Kerstin Florian

CEO and founder, Kerstin Florian International

By Lisa Schryver

Nature-inspired wellness, but with a modern twist is Kerstin Florian's approach to skin care, largely due to her upbringing in Sweden. As CEO and founder of Kerstin Florian International, she has built her product line and treatments based on a holistic approach to skin care.

Last October, Kerstin Florian International was awarded the ISPA Innovate Award for its Energy Balancing Ritual, a unique treatment that harnesses the mind-body connection. *Skin Inc.* caught up with Florian to discuss how skin health is tied to inner body health, and learn her perspective of the natural beauty movement.



Photo courtesy of Armenta



Photo courtesy of Eunice Kim

Florian in the newly constructed formulation lab at Kerstin Florian International headquarters in Lake Forest, Calif.

Skin Inc. (SI): How did you get started with natural beauty?

Kerstin Florian (KF): Growing up in Sweden, all I used was natural things for my skin—berry extracts, birch oil, mineral waters. It came from a spa lifestyle, which was more about health and wellness than beauty or pampering. It revolved around the four cornerstones of wellness: proper nutrition, regular exercise, peace of mind and care of face and body. A lifestyle built on those cornerstones leads to inner health and, in turn, outer beauty.

SI: Who were some of your greatest mentors?

KF: As a young girl, I remember seeing the Elizabeth Arden beauty counter and the beauty advisors in their white coats. It inspired me right away—the way they looked and consulted customers. This woman had

created a namesake brand found around the world, and I wanted that! Then, as an adult starting out in the industry, Aida Grey became a personal mentor and friend who gave me a big boost when she put me in charge of her salon. She was a true pioneer in natural skin care and is an inspirational example of one of the first female entrepreneurs in this business.

SI: How is skin health tied to inner body health?

KF: Skin is part of our body and our biggest organ, in fact. If our bodies are unhealthy or imbalanced, it shows in our skin, hair, nails and energy. You can't have one without the other. Mental health and psychological well-being is the key. When the psyche focuses on good, it multiplies. Just a little bit of good becomes much more. And good health not only makes us look better, it lets us live better.

SI: What is one of your most memorable moments?

KF: It would be traveling to the arctic and living in a tent waiting to meet with a Sami elder to learn about their traditional healing treatments. They won't talk to just anyone—I was lucky enough to be allowed. It allowed me to create one of the most memorable treatments of my career, the Sami Zen, based on these rich, ancient rituals. Sharing the incredible wellness traditions I have found around the world and contemporizing them for today's spa clients is one of my greatest joys.

SI: What has been one of your biggest lessons so far?

KF: You don't have to be a massive company to make a big impact on an industry or, more importantly, on the customer. I remember being placed into the Bonaventure Hotel salon to replace Lancôme early in our brand history. This was a massive brand with much recognition, but I knew my products and philosophy were amazing. Because of our customized, spa-based approach, which was quite revolutionary at the time, we outsold them from the start and created customers who use our regimen products to this day.

SI: What piece of advice would give to a new business owner?

KF: Follow your passion, and it won't feel like work. It will be challenging, yes, but rewarding and uplifting. Hire good people, and empower them to do their jobs. Forge lasting business relationships and nurture them as both parties grow together. Remember why you got into business in the first place, and it will sustain you through highs and lows.

SI: If you could go back in time and tell yourself something, what would it be?

KF: I would tell myself to write, photograph and otherwise take note of all the incredible opportunities and experiences—even the challenging ones—that will happen during my life, especially witnessing the physical and mental transformation and impact that natural health can have on people, and keep them close in heart and mind as the journey continues to evolve.

SI: Where do you see the future of the natural beauty industry?

KF: Natural beauty is here to stay, but clean beauty is what I see as the future. Not everything that comes from nature is good for us. Clean sums it up even more. It is clean for our health, our skin and our planet. ✂



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