

Oprah's Skin Guru

MS. WINFREY'S MONTREAL-BASED FACIALIST IS MAKING SOME OF OUR FAVOURITE (BEAUTY) THINGS.

BY NOA NICHOL

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Jennifer Brodeur's collection of Peoni products were counted among the last curation of Oprah Winfrey's favourite things. We chatted with this Canadian skin-care expert about her work, her beauty beliefs and, of course, her very personal relationship with the fabulous Lady O. Jbskinguru.com

How did you go from making skin-treatment tools to skin-care products?

JB: When our company was founded in 2003 it was oriented to skin-care technology—specifically, the MAX+ LED device that can be found in the new **SkinCeuticals by Project Skin** boutique [see page 4 for more on this beautiful-skin-making machine]. That eventually morphed into something different. In fact, I think I always knew it would—that I would make MAX+ with my husband and after that do products. The products ended up becoming more and more important to me, as I started working with more high-profile clients. It made me fussier about what I was using on their skin. The other thing is that MAX+ was built to last. It's not a "throwaway" device that needs to be replaced constantly. It can last up to 15 years! So that was another reason to go the product route—and I'm really glad I did.

Tell us more about your brand and your personal beauty beliefs.

JB: When it comes to makeup, I don't wear any. Makeup is certainly a choice but, for me, it has never been a priority. That makes my skin, how it looks and feels and its overall health, particularly important—the same goes for the mix of technology and ingredients in the products I use. The idea of "clean" and "organic" these days may be, I think, a little misguided or misleading. After all, you can go into the forest and eat an "organic" mushroom and get very, very sick. It could even be fatal. In other words, ingredients need to be stable as well as organic, without any germs or bacteria or toxins or poisons that can cause skin issues. We're so focused on organic these days and what's not in there, but the reality is that certain things need to be included in products to ensure that you're not compromising the health of your skin. Personally, I'd rather my products be stable and efficient, with integrity, than simply organic. And that's been the mission with **JB Skin Guru**.

This may sound complicated, but I like when things are complicated. I thrive on the concept of finding solutions to problems. I'm a researcher at heart. I'm also not your typical girly-girl; yes, I'm in the skin-care business, and I like pretty things, but I also like things to make sense, and I really like them to work. My team jokes around and calls me a CSI for skin care because I'm always on the hunt for ingredients for my products that will actually cause a physiological change in the skin. I even go so far as asking my clients what they're eating and when, to make that correlation between what you're putting in your body and how that is coming out and impacting your skin.

Speaking of clients, how in the world did you become Oprah's facialist?

JB: Ms. Winfrey—everyone in her circle or who is close to her calls her that—was receiving MAX+ treatments in California, where it's very popular. Her staff reached out to me and, I remember, I drove myself to that



TONI GAUTHIER



first meeting and made the conscious decision that, despite her being who she is, I would just be myself. I guess that decision was a good one, because I went home that day and our relationship never ended! With high-profile clients it actually becomes a really intricate, intimate experience. After all, you get to see them with no makeup on! I think this is one of the reasons that Ms. Winfrey appreciated my authenticity and honesty that day, and asked me to assist her and help her to manage her skin health going forward.

She also, clearly, loves your products! How did you feel when you found out they had landed among Oprah's favourite things?

JB: We actually didn't know she would include us until September, not too long before that issue of *The Oprah Magazine* came out. I was completely taken aback when I heard the news, that the Peoni cleanser, toner and cream had made her list—it just goes to show you that relationships are truly golden ... and, also, the peony just happens to be Ms. Winfrey's favorite flower!

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Well, if it's good enough for Oprah, it's definitely good enough for us! Tell us more about the four-piece Peoni collection by JB Skin Guru.

JB: Peonies are floral royalty; in Japan they are called the "king of flowers." I work with the root of the white peony, which has anti-inflammatory and anti-aging properties. In Chinese medicine, peony extract has been used for centuries in teas; the same goes for Siberia, where it's thought to fight disease. In fact, there are whole books written on just the peony and its incredible powers. Beyond that, I'm a researcher. My background as a chemistry and biology teacher makes me curious about the ingredients themselves, and I always try to do something new, that no one else is doing—provided, of course, that it's effective. I always think that's more fun.

What's up next for JB Skin Guru?

I'm actually working on a new segment of the line, which draws from my Finnish roots on my mother's side. I can't say too much about it right now, as it's really in the initial stages, but it's an exciting collection that contains lingonberry, which grows throughout Finland. The nice part is it's being developed so that it can be mingled and integrated with our Peoni products. So, something to look forward to!

A friend who met her told us that Oprah smells really good. Is it true?

JB: Ha, yes, she does! She's also incredibly dedicated and hard working—she's always working. She pays incredible attention to detail. And, she's human. Take away the fact that she's well known, and you get to see that she has a personal life, a personal side.

Finally, being from Montreal, what makes you a proud Canadian maker?

JB: You know, the more I travel, the more I appreciate Canada; our country is so open and loving and people in other countries around the world know that. I even love the quirky, cliché things that make us "Canadian." I once borrowed a book from Ms. Winfrey and, when I'd finished reading it, I brought it back to her. I guess this wasn't something she was used to, because she said, "You're so honest!" Well, I'm Canadian! ♥