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Bellezza Gentile

As demand grows for skincare products that are genuinely ethical, natural and sustainable, a clutch of independent Italian brands is leading the charge, writes **Jenny Oldaker**



*Honieh Deep Detox
natural face mask*



Images courtesy of manufacturers, see overleaf for more details

*Above: Allegro Natura body cream
Below: The Casa Mencarelli range*

*Above: Terre Verdi FranChouliPom
Facial Serum. Right: Furtuna Skin
After Shave Serum*



The mainstream beauty industry has long been associated with some dubious eco-credentials, from the use of cosmetic chemicals to the production of around 120 billion units of packaging each year. However, the chemical-rich, packaging-heavy products of big multinational companies are being increasingly challenged by the growth of more ethical skincare and cosmetics brands and entrepreneurs who are placing their emphasis on natural, organic ingredients and planet-friendly packaging.

And where better for these entrepreneurs to find inspiration than Italy? The land is home to a dizzying array of beneficial natural ingredients and medicinal plants, perfect for developing potent products to nourish and soothe, while respecting the environment.

Here we meet the people behind some of Italy's beautiful green skincare brands to find out more...



Alessandra De Gregorio, founder of Terre Verdi

Terre Verdi

Alessandra De Gregorio is the Founder of Terre Verdi, an eco-luxe skincare range inspired by her upbringing in the Sicilian countryside.

How did Terre Verdi begin?

Terre Verdi launched in 2013, but my passion for the environment started much earlier. I grew up in Sicily, where I learned to appreciate the natural world on my father's and grandmother's organic farms. Later on, I studied finance in New York City and worked in London, but the constant rush eventually led me to switch gears. I wanted to get back to a more connected way of living. I retrained in holistic skincare and aromatherapy, and began creating eco-friendly formulas. Terre Verdi was a return to my love of all things organic.

What makes your products special?

The green beauty industry is extremely competitive, so it's important to us that our skincare products really stand out. Yes, they are cruelty-free, vegan and natural, but we make an extra effort to exceed customer expectations. Every aspect of the range has sustainability at its heart, from the fully recyclable packaging to



Terre Verdi NeroliPom moisturiser

the botanical ingredients. Our brand is built on connections: a love of family, nature, and the beauty of the Mediterranean region. Our ethos is 'embracing the planet as much as we embrace ourselves', and our official credentials, which include COSMOS organic certification by the Soil Association and Cruelty Free International, help validate this stance.

Which are your most popular products?

I love FranChouliPom Nourishing Facial Serum at night and I cannot start the day without some NeroliPom Moisturiser. These antioxidant-rich and hydrating blends are perfect for dry, sensitive and mature skin types, and they also help lift your mood thanks to essential oils such as neroli and frankincense.



Terre Verdi Serum and Cream

Why is it important that people choose ethical beauty products?

The planet's resources are finite, and choosing ethically made products that are limited in their impact is a step towards living in harmony with our world. Sadly, greenwashing is becoming more and more of a problem. Look for trusted certifications like Soil Association and Cruelty Free International, read up on the brand's story, and don't be afraid to ask questions.

What's your top beauty tip?

Always cleanse thoroughly before bed! Don't leave make-up, pollution or daily grime coating your skin overnight, as this can lead to issues like acne, dull complexion and irritation. Cleansing with a product like our GoodOils Cleansing Oil will remove build-up, as well as adding moisture – essential for maintaining healthy, glowing skin.

www.terreverdi.com

Images courtesy of Terre Verdi

Choosing ethically made products that are limited in their impact is a step towards living in harmony with our world

Honieh

Erika Boldrin, Founder of Honieh, believes in natural beauty and products that can make a difference to your wellbeing and support your health.



Honieh serums



Erika Boldrin

Images courtesy of Honieh

What motivated you to start Honieh?

I've been vegan for many years and I have always placed a lot of importance both on what I eat and the products I use on my body. I was travelling a lot for work and I always found myself buying natural products in the US because I was struggling to find them in Italy, so I decided to create my own natural products, with a young and trendy look. And so Honieh was born towards the end of 2019.

What is it that makes your products special?

Some brands say their products are natural when actually only a small part of them is natural. That's why I decided that I wanted my products to be AIAB (Associazione Italiana per l'Agricoltura Biologica) eco-bio certified. We've been committed since the beginning to being as sustainable as possible, including

removing plastic where possible and minimising our shipping packaging. We're always searching for new ways to be as eco-friendly as possible.

What have been your biggest challenges so far?

Starting a couple of months before Covid began wasn't easy, especially in terms of product development. Even now many things are still really slow. Another big challenge is that sometimes we can't do everything we want to because of very high minimum order quantities of some custom products.

Which are the most popular products in your range?

The most popular one is Soft Cloud, which is our cleanser – it is loved by everyone. Our Deep Detox and Rise & Shine masks and our Any Weekday cream are my own favourites.

Why is it important that buyers choose ethical beauty products?

I think because a change in terms of sustainability must begin from us as buyers in general. The more demand there is, the more companies are obliged to pay attention and therefore lead to a real change towards sustainability.

What's your top beauty tip?

My best beauty advice would be a whole set of things that comprise the daily skincare routine: stay hydrated, eat right, take your vitamins and sleep the right number of hours.

www.honiehbeauty.com



The Honieh face mask range comprises Deep Detox, Rise & Shine and Glow Up

NATURAL AND ORGANIC SPAS

Feel good inside and out on your next trip to Italy, with an organic spa hotel experience.

The Naturalis Bio Resort in Puglia



Images courtesy of Naturalis Bio Resort

NATURALIS BIO RESORT

Via Traglia, sn – 73025 Martano, Puglia
www.naturalisbioresort.com

This salubrious masseria in Puglia is nestled within Naturalis Azienda Agricola, an 18-hectare farm growing olives, aloe vera, wheat, grapes and a variety of medicinal plants. The active ingredients of the farm's produce is harnessed to create products for the resort's bedrooms and spa. Guests can enjoy a 'wellness walk' through the organic cultivations of the Mediterranean plants or take a guided tour in the aloe plantations to learn about the harvesting of aloe leaves and the extraction of the plant's gel, and find out how cosmetics are made from organic and natural extracts.



The Naturalis spa



Light and shade in the spa

THEINER'S GARTEN

Via Andreas Hofer 1, 39010 Gargazzone, Alto Adige
www.theinersgarten.it

Need a break from the treadmill of life? This organic wellness hotel could be just what the doctor ordered. The organic sauna offers the uplifting aromas from rosemary, lemon balm and thyme from the garden, and the varied treatments, inspired by ancient knowledge of nature, include water therapy to boost the immune system and to reduce stress. The tranquil wellness garden itself is the perfect place to switch off and unwind.

BORG SAN PIETRO

Loc. Palazzetto – 53012 Chiusdino, Tuscany
www.borgosantopietro.com

The luxury spa at this boutique hotel is special indeed. At this haven on health experiences you can start with a tea infusion, freshly picked from the hotel garden, while therapies incorporate the hotel's own natural skincare line, Seed to Skin, which has been developed using ingredients from the Borgo's farm.

FIND OUT MORE OR SHOP ONLINE

Buy online or find more places around Italy for indulgent ethical skincare on your next trip to the peninsula.

► GREEN PEA

Via E. Fenoglioletti, 20 – 10126 Turin, Piedmont

www.greenpea.com

Green Pea is all about a new way of consuming: with every purchase you make here you can become part of the change. This retail park offers five levels dedicated to products from Italy and around the world that have a low impact on the environment. It includes 66 shops, a museum, three restaurants, a swimming pool, a spa, and a club dedicated to creative idleness. One floor is focused on 'Beauty', with a special space dedicated to Green cosmetics.

► AURORA ETHICAL BEAUTY

Via Roma, 32/a – 11013 Courmayeur, Aosta

www.auroraethicalbeauty.com

One of Italy's first eco-beauty boutiques, at Aurora you can find only brands that have been carefully selected on the basis of natural ingredients, transparency, efficacy, and certifications that ensure their ethical credentials. Well worth a stop for a wide range of excellent products that are good for the planet.

► BEATRICE AMBRA

www.airbnb.co.uk/experiences/1660526

Milan-based Beatrice is an expert in natural cosmetics and offers workshops either via Zoom or in person, showing participants how to look after their skin and create their own simple homemade skin recipe using natural ingredients. Courses can be booked via airbnb.

► ECCO VERDE

www.ecco-verde.co.uk

For organic and natural skincare, hair care and make-up, you'll find a host of renowned brands from across Europe at Ecco Verde. It's a perfect starting point if you're looking for plenty of ethical choices in one place.

La Furtuna Estate spreads over 800 acres of naturally maintained Sicilian countryside



Skin products

Images courtesy of Furtuna Skin

Furtuna Skin

Kim Walls is co-founder and CEO of Sicily-based clean beauty company Furtuna Skin, and is passionate about the company's high-performance natural products.



Kim Walls, CEO of Furtuna Skin

How did Furtuna Skin come about?

Furtuna Skin's co-founder and Chief Creative Officer, Agatha Relota Luczo, and I wanted to create a socially responsible skincare brand that combined nature with modern science to drive unprecedented performance in skincare. Four years in the making, including testing, formulating, and reformulating, we launched our Made In Italy brand in 2019.

What makes your products special?

Our ingredients are grown and wild-foraged at La Furtuna Estate, an 800-plus-acre organically certified farm in Sicily populated by over 600 species of wild plants, nearly 100 of them with long histories as medicinal powerhouses. Our land has not been subjected to fertilisers and regular watering schedules, so the plants that grow here are stronger and more resilient than cultivated plants. This,

combined with the wild-foraged method by which we gather our ingredients, and the Soundbath™ method by which we extract their actives, leads to the highest potency of bioactives.

Tell us more about your eco-credentials

Furtuna Skin goes beyond organic certifications, labels, or awards, by adopting regenerative business practices, ensuring that the land and plant life on La Furtuna Estate will thrive for generations to come. Our sustainable methods include solar energy, crop diversity and a natural fertilisation system based on bacteria, not chemicals. In addition, a lot of work on the farm is done by hand, which strengthens the plants and the local workforce.

We have a zero-waste policy and utilise every part of our plants so that no active part goes to waste. We create seed banks and revive nearly extinct species of flora. All our botanicals are USDA organic certified. We also use glass bottles that can be recycled endlessly, and every order is packed using sustainable honeycomb paper padding instead of tissue paper or bubble wrap.

Which are your most popular products?

These include our Replenishing Balm, which you layer over moisturiser as the last step in your morning or evening routine to help repair surface damage to illuminate dull, fatigued skin. Also, our BiPhase Moisturizing Oil – a two-part system designed to deliver a double dose of hydration to plump, protect against collagen breakdown and replenish the skin's moisture barrier.

Why do you think should people buy ethical beauty products?

Every choice we make as a consumer always affects someone, and people with purchasing power have an opportunity to use their power to affect someone for the better. One small step taken by many people can elevate more responsible consumer consumption and help tackle some of the more significant problems we're experiencing, like climate change. I think that's a choice worth making.

www.furtunaskin.com



Replenishing Balm

Casa Mencarelli

Lucia Mencarelli founded Casa Mencarelli in 2018, a brand rooted in organic, natural ingredients sourced from Italy and the Mediterranean.



Lucia Mencarelli

How did Casa Mencarelli come about?

I grew up in the Umbrian countryside. My love for nature and natural skincare started early – I made my first 'potion' when I was a teenager! A few years later I developed an allergy to synthetic ingredients and fragrances; I had to find a healthier alternative to mainstream skincare and moved to a 100 per cent organic lifestyle, and my health improved dramatically. I started studying professional organic skincare formulation, made my first products, and people started asking me if they could them, so I created my own brand.

What inspired your brand?

I'm Italian, so I wanted to create amazing products starting from my roots. I use traditional Italian and Mediterranean ingredients in my products, like mineral-rich green clay from Sicily, lemon peel powder, grape seed oil, extra-virgin olive oil, beeswax and honey from the Italian Apennine hills, tomato seed oil and

rice bran oils sourced from Italy and the Mediterranean area. The packaging is inspired by my region, Umbria, using Mediterranean colours like turquoise, blue and orange – representing the Italian sun and the sea. And the font for the logo was taken from ancient writing in my region.

Tell us about Casa Mencarelli's eco-credentials

We are COSMOS Organic / Soil Association certified. This is the strictest organic standard in organic skincare worldwide, so customers can be reassured of the quality of ingredients and the process, as well as the sustainability of the supply chain and distribution. And I'm very strict with the choice of ingredients, due to my own sensitivity.

Which are your most popular products?

My best sellers are the Honey & Orange Toner and the Nourishing Tomato Cream & Cleanser, which are very soothing on skin and smell lovely. The product I use most is the Sea Buckthorn Serum because it's anti-ageing and absorbs quickly, it can be used in the eye area, it's perfect under make-up and before SPF protection on sunny days. It's always in my handbag.

What's your top beauty tip?

Waterless products, for example a balm or an oil serum, can do wonders for your skin if they are massaged in for at least five minutes every day. That time dedicated to yourself makes all the difference to the way you feel and look during the day!

www.casamencarelli.co.uk

Casa Mencarelli products



Allegro Natura

Cristina Gerbino is Marketing Manager at Allegro Natura, which offers natural and organic skincare products from selected Italian organic farms.



Cristina Gerbino

How did Allegro Natura come about?

We were born in 2008 as an Italian artisan company and production laboratory of organic cosmetics and detergents. Today we manufacture sustainable cosmetic products, respecting people and Earth. We only choose raw materials that are 100 per cent organic, which are then – through our specialist knowledge in the subject – transformed into active ingredients.

Tell us about Allegro Natura's eco-credentials

Our products are AIAB, LAV and VEGAN certified. Our entire production chain, from the selection of raw materials to production and distribution, is always attentive to sustainability and our organic ingredients come from highly selected Italian farms.

What have been the biggest challenges and proudest moments for the business so far?

The biggest challenge has been becoming a key player in the market in just a few years. Today we are one of the most important organic cosmetics brands in Italy.

We are proud to have recently launched our project 'Allegro Natura Phygital', an interactive programme for personalised skincare, at Green Pea in Turin



Allegro Natura skincare

(the world's first Green retail park, see p48). There it is possible to create tailor-made cosmetics personalised to your individual skin needs.

What are your most popular products?

Our solid line is very popular – shampoo, conditioner, bath foam and body lotion to apply directly on wet skin. I personally love our Eyelash & Eyebrow Oil.

What's your top beauty tip?

To undertake a deep skincare routine twice a day, every day, choosing organic products according to the needs of your particular skin type.

www.allegronatura.it



Allegro Natura Eye Contour Serum

Images courtesy of Allegro Natura