SUKE KRAMER
All about suki skincare

MAKEUP BOUNTY:
New Colors, Formulas and Tools

How to Do a Great SOCIAL-MEDIA CAMPAIGN
Her namesake line aims to empower women by addressing common skin issues and sensitivities through pure, responsible products.

by Regina Molaro

At different ages and stages of life, women certainly have varying skincare needs and issues. Beyond blemishes, dry skin and fine lines, some women such as Suki Kramer, founder of Suki Skincare, have to contend with common but devastating conditions such as eczema. These issues can really impact a woman’s self-esteem—especially during her teenage years.

In search of a solution to her own skincare needs, Kramer founded Suki Skincare—a pure skincare line with no synthetics that Kramer formulates herself in her lab in Massachusetts. Here, Kramer, president and formulator, shares her vision and the journey that has led her to Suki.
Please share with us some fall/winter skincare tips.

Fall is all about preparing the skin for the long winter ahead, particularly when you live on the East Coast, as I do. Winters are hard on the skin. Exfoliation is always important to me. But in the winter, it’s because of the dryness and indoor heat, and also because we don’t get a lot of fresh air.

I suggest exfoliating regularly to keep the skin dewy and fresh, and to remove all of those dry, dead skin cells. I use a heavier eye cream at night, but I don’t recommend using a heavy overnight cream all over my face—a facial oil instead because the skin is meant to be breached and, perhaps, over-night. I highly recommend using a body oil or lotion right after bathing, while still damp, so that it absorbs well. All moisturizers absorb best while skin is slightly damp. I also try to avoid exposing it to too much heat, even though it can feel good when it’s so cold.

What advice can you provide on where to find beauty stores or sell them better?

Consumers need help understanding their skin types, so don’t be afraid to point out their specific issues and let them know which products will help balance their skin conditions. People want solutions, and with some help, they certainly can have much better skin—which I find many people don’t really believe. I also suggest helping to simplify regimens and the entire process for them, and try to overwhelm them with too many product suggestions.

Kits are also a great way for women to enter a brand. I have complete brand kits for youthful or clear skin, which contain all a woman needs to try our line. Every kit contains a 10-day trial size, so it needs to start a simple skincare regimen is a cleaner and moisturizer. But retailers should definitely give her a few samples to try—if not, they’ll either dislike it or purchase it. In a spa, it’s much easier for estheticians to sell the line because they have the time to educate the customers and gain their trust while performing a facial. At the salon, you only have a moment or two with your customer. So, salt doesn’t believe in competing with your stores by discounting. We’ve been the one hold-out brand in that way. So, be our help our retail partners but not.

Tell us about the iPhone app launch that was designed to assist retailers in determining the appropriate products for customers.

We decided to go in a different direction with that and will probably revisit that concept next year. We really aren’t sure if the numbers are for in mobile sales anyway. And I’m not sure how many have put into this model, we’re trying to make the brand more user-friendly, instead of expanding the line to our reps and trainers.

Tell us about your ambassador program.

The suki ambassador program, which launched about nine months ago, is really about helping women become independent. Fans of the line can spread their love and belief in suki from home, through suki spa parties, networking and talking about it with their friends—essentially in the same way any home-based business works, with very little investment. And it’s been a huge success. We’re growing at a healthy rate, but the brand is still underground, so we’re trying to educate them to further their education. The number there is incredible, and the president, Carol Leary, has let incredible growth and change. I can’t say enough about the entire start of the line. I’m very proud of it all and I’m really proud to be a part of that place.

Other programs participate in a ballot-box dance competition to support the International Rett Syndrome Foundation. Also, we have a poll that has been over 10,000,000. My first love in life has always been dance, but ever since I was a child, of course, my insecurities held me back. I started dancing ballet around five years ago. Today, I dance in eight to 10 national competitions a year. I am lucky enough to find the line for dancing—fulfilling that childhood dream. Each time I practice and compete, I grow and change, and do something for myself. It’s like hard-core therapy, but more challenging and fun!

Rupasa Muto is a freelance journalist based in New York City.

Beauty Store Business: Please tell us about your previous work experience and how it’s launching suki.

KRAMER: Like many entrepreneurs, I explored multiple ventures looking for what would eventually become my calling—to launch suki skincare. Prior to starting suki, I started a company servicing temporary housing equipment. At the time, I was pursuing competitive tennis. I also realized through talking through classes that I am really a writer—non-fiction being my true interest. Being a writer means that there are traits innate to my character, which I could not deny: the need to know the reason behind things, to always dig deeper and cut to the heart of things, as such as having difficult questions to get to the truth. So I pursued a degree in journalism with a minor in psychology from University of Massachusetts Amherst, which led me to a career in fiction writing and honed my research skills and developed the discipline of validating my facts. This is all part of my personal path of self-discovery. I always felt the need to be independent, self-employed and not beholden to anyone for my welfare. And along the way, I have always felt the desire to be a part of a deep in intricately that colored how I saw the world. To even consider the category called “skin care” is misleading as it is a lot of marketing speak. When you get claims of efficacy but in fact, the skin is irritated so that the immune response kicks in—drives inflammation ‘reduces the appearance of lines and wrinkles’ is quite a stretch. This was the kind of information that I was discovering on route to becoming a beauty consultant. The desired effect was fleeting because the skin is capable of building up a tolerance for irritants. As a result, it requires even higher concentrations (of a formula) to achieve the same effect over time, slowly designating the body’s otherwise regenerative abilities to provide vibrant, healthy skin.

I decided that I’d find a way to create my own skincare solutions that would enable, complement and support the body’s ability to achieve balance. Furthermore, I would use only 100% pure ingredients that the human body would respond to in a healthy way, achieving far better results than anything I could purchase in a department store or a pharmacy. This meant two things: using absolutely no synthetic chemicals ever, and that my products must be proven to work equal to, if not far better than, anything one could expect from a conventional skincare product. It was not enough to develop a product that appeared to work. I wouldn’t settle for anything less than the full validation necessary to back up any claim, thus the need for clinical trials and validation.

I reached out to cosmetic chemists in the industry, first hearing only that my goal was impossible. I didn’t know anything about how to create what I was trying to do. I remember telling a chemist my goal—to create a product with completely green ingredients and clean, non-toxic and all-natural ingredients. It turned out that it wasn’t synthetic or all-natural. I was laughed at and told it was completely impossible unless I was willing to use a few synthetics. I took this remark as a challenge and so continued. Through two years of a roller-coaster ride of self-doubt, experimentation and daily study on my own and with the invaluable help of, let’s say, more progressive-minded industry chemists
who mentioned me—including traditional herbalists and dermatologists—I became a cosmetic chemist and went through rounds of trial and error before finally hitting on my unique extricate and ideal emulsion.

I continued from my earlier days of helping to heal my body with herbs, learning from a local herbalist, and then, for each Rickshaw. I fit in terms of working with natural chemistry, I would study with my mentors. I can’t possibly remember all of the things I didn’t know that long ago. But it figure it out yet, as well as began to get deep into the cosmetic industry, uncovering and learning about the truth behind what is read on a label or bottle—information that was mostly hardwired and subjective (my determination to stay true to my ideals and share my knowledge).

I launched four products, among them, the still most popular today—the exfoliate foaming cleanser along with my first essential now known as velvet hand & body cream.

When was suki founded and what is its mission?

suki was founded in 2010. My goal has always been to solve my skin problems, knowing there must be other people like me seeking solutions. I wanted to create a skincare brand that actually does what it says, is actually effective and truly pure. Along this journey, my confidence has grown, not only because I solved my own skin problems, but because I’ve gone through the struggles of growing and maintaining a business on my own, which has changed me greatly from that insecure girl.

My story is the same as millions of other women. This is why my tagline “Know Your Beauty” is so important to me. It’s about being educated and informed, empowered and confident—in exactly who we are—embracing our ages, our histories, and all the struggles we’ve endured and overcome to become the people we are. We’re not perfect or a fabricated façade populated by people who capitate on our insecurities; but we embrace ourselves for the individuals we truly are—underscoring ourselves and defining what beauty means on our own terms. suki’s skincare mission is to empower woman to feel beautiful and strong in their own skin, and to provide real, effective and healthy solutions so that true beauty can radiate without inhibition.

Please describe the collection in terms of its product range. Our skincare collection is designed to celebrate the uniqueness of every woman, recognizing that no two people share the same skin—each having a unique set of strengths and challenges. However, women that I know really has only one issue. We all have multiples issues that at times seem to contradict one another like having dry or oily skin.

Other products that treat only one specific skin type can aggravate combination skin or frustrate the consumer who believes that she’ll solve all her problems with one regimen. Our regimens are designed to address the skin in a harmonizing manner, taking the whole into consideration.

What types of ingredients are used?

Well, it may be clear what we do not use—synthetic chemicals. Not to say it wouldn’t be easier to use a synthetic now and age—the filers possess fantastic flow dynamics and stabilizers, and the coagulants are very consistent, making manufacturing much easier. This is why there are so many different synthetic chemicals that can be legally hidden inside of other ingredients—which consumers don’t even know about. And what we don’t know can hurt us.

We don’t know the effects synthetic chemicals can have on our health and well-being. There are more than 80,000 synthetic chemicals used in production every day. Only a few thousand of them have been tested for toxicity, not including endocrine disruption or immune factors. The tests are factored for toxicity on a 500-pound man, not a woman or a developing child.

suki uses only ingredients that the human body is accustomed to and literally recognizes on a cellular level. For instance, all of our hydrating products begin with the soki proprietary high potency botanical concentrate, a triple filtered extract of the rose centifolia buds. Sourced from the steep hills of Grasse, France, between the altitudes of 300 meters and 4000 meters, these roses are hand selected and harvested for their unique abilities as a toning and astringent agent, as well as a rich source of vitamins and antioxidants, all while optimizing the skin pH and strengthening cells.

As the foundation of the line, the high potency botanical concentrate is the carrier that provides intense efficacy through unaltered biocompatibility. It uniquely matches skin’s polarity, fluids and water solubility, providing deep derma penetration and delivery of soki bioactive cosmeceuticals. Since our stringent standards—which are necessary to achieve the efficacy of the for healing baby skin—up to 80 years old, but for marketing purposes we say the sweet spot is ages 25 to 58.

We conduct clinical trials on our final regimens and formulas, and to be a “suki formula” it must meet our criteria of being both 100% synthetic-free and efficacious.

We’ve built my company on my ideals and have always had that integrity. I believe that this [f fact] can be felt by our consumers, especially the ones who have been with us from the beginning. And, having gone through these kinds of in-depth skin issues myself, I can empathize with my customers and what they are going through.

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What are some of the recent awards and honors your line has received?

We won the Beauty & Body award from Delilah Gold for our intensive nourishing cream. It was heralded as a “Best Squalane” item. Our soothing cleanser bar won the Self magazine 2013 Healthy Beauty Award. It was also a finalist for the IMCD bath and body product innovation award. Our removal bio-rejuvenating facial peel won an IDEA award for best cosmetic innovation of the year.

Which celebrities embrace suki products?

To name a few: Eva Longoria, Edie Falco, Bethenny Frankel, Jenny Garth, Amber Heard, Elisabeth Rohm and Hayden Panettiere. We were also featured in Jessica Alba’s new book, The Honest Life: Living Naturally and True to You. She refers to our nourishing formulas, which were designed for dry skin, specifically the moisture-rich cleansing lotion.

Where are your products sold?

Of course, our products sell via suki.com, as well as through independent retailers, on Amazon, and in regional pharmacies. We also sell at independent natural-foods markets. Whole Foods and other chains, as well as Saffron Rouge.com, among other retailers.

Does suki sell internationally?

If so, where?

We do sell internationally. In fact, our best and largest growth market is Denmark. Other international markets include Japan, Germany, Dubai and the United Kingdom, among others. We’ve been getting our feet wet in the international market for the past eight years, and suki skincare has been greatly recognized. We’re seeing signs of rapid expansion.

How else has suki evolved over the years?

We’ve grown each year, but our core concept has remained always the same. We’ve always owned 100% of the company, and because we’ve never had investors, there has never been that type of influence on my ideals.

This has made growth a longer curve, but it’s about us coming together, coming back to ourselves, coming back to empowerment. Not just [my own empowerment], but all of us as a team here, and the individuals that really take ownership in this company. We are small, but growing fast. We are a bunch of strong, opinionated, thoughtful women—and we’ve finally added a couple of cool men—who responsibly and creatively contribute to our dedication to our work and our growth. We are a team, and because of each of us, we keep going forward. Each of us has had to learn new things and take on new challenges. As for new products, we add them based on the feedback from our loyal customer base and our own needs. Although we considered more of a facial-care company, we do have amazing body-care products. We also still make three body products from when we initially launched. Those include the velvet hand & body cream, delicate hydrating body oil and the butter cream salve—which I think is the most underutilized product in my line because it’s so incredibly unique in texture and healing.

How many employees did the company initially have? How many are currently on board?

Initially, suki launched with just me doing absolutely everything—from order entry to formulation, mixing, filling, labeling and selling, physical relations, marketing, creating my logo, website and, well, you get the idea. The company remained quite small for quite some time. Currently, the company has more than 24 staffed employees and a team of 85 independent representatives.

What are your best-selling products?

Our best sellers are the exfoliate foaming cleanser, intensive nourishing cream and eye lift radiance renewal cream, as well as the balancing day lotion.

Do you have a favorite product or products?

I’m 48 years old. Like most people, I have combination skin—dry on the bottom. But I’m beginning to embrace my laugh lines on top. So my regime involves...
strong safe solutions for your skin problems & sensitivities.™