

MODERN LUXURY

Angelo

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Local Luminaries Share Their
Healthy Hacks

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5 QUESTIONS WITH...

MARTHA SOFFER

For more than 20 years, ayurvedic practitioner Martha Soffer ran retreats out of her home, helping countless clients achieve their health and wellness goals via customized treatments based on ancient Indian therapies. Now, Surya Spa (suryawellness.com) at Santa Monica Proper Hotel is her home base, giving a whole new set of clients access to her coveted offerings. Here, Soffer—who grew up in Colombia and currently resides in Mandeville Canyon—shares her story and clues us in on what's next. *BY LAURA ECKSTEIN JONES*

When did you first become interested in ayurvedic healing, and how did you turn that interest into a career? I came to America to get an advanced degree in computer science at Maharishi International University, an accredited school that also had transcendental meditation as part of the curriculum. But one day in the dining hall, I met three women who were eating together, silently, hair covered in oil and just glowing. I had to find out why, and they told me they were doing a week of ayurvedic treatments called panchakarma on campus, and said I should try it. I did, and never looked back!

There are so many spas in L.A., but none that offer exactly what Surya does. Why do you think that is? That's the most common comment from first-time visitors after they experience a four-handed Surya treatment with custom-cooked oils: 'It's not a spa...' And they wander off in a transformed state. Treatments run from 90 minutes to four hours, to seven to 28 days of four hours every day, with two therapists working on you in perfect synchrony. The experience really is transformative and lasting.

How can readers incorporate ayurvedic practices into their own lives? We offer a wonderful online course with four modules. ... That's a great place to start. And we have products that help, too—for skin, body and overall wellness. Basically, ayurveda teaches people to cool down when they're too fiery (emotionally and physically); and to calm down when they're too 'windy,' too scattered,

overwhelmed, all that normal stuff; and to energize when they're feeling too heavy, too earthlike. It's all about balancing and rebalancing ourselves as we need. It's the same for the skin: cooling for the irritated kind, calming for dry skin and energizing for skin that's dull and needs a lift. At its core, ayurveda is really, really simple, and has such noticeable and good results.

How do you see Surya evolving over time? We're doing more nature-based retreats—last year we did a week in Bend, Ore., and three weeks in Kauai, on a gorgeous estate filled with fruit trees and landscapes. We'll open a permanent location in Kauai soon, and in a few years, another in Ko Olina on Oahu. But the real evolution is getting the ayurvedic goodness to more and more people through our wonderful

face creams and body oils and bath soaks and yoni products—because with each of them comes an introduction to truly natural and you-can't-help-but-feel luxury—that luxury of real self-care that comes right from the healing heart of nature.

How does living in Los Angeles inspire your wellness practices and rituals? We've got the mountains; we've got the ocean and beaches; and we've got so many people interested in wellness, from sound baths to breathwork to chi healing to organic, wonderful food. It's just a question of what we immerse ourselves in, how we practice self-care, how we ultimately practice happiness and how we share that. That's what really inspires me—sharing the good that I can, helping others and watching everyone feel better.



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