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**FAR HORIZONS A SPECTACULAR NEW ZEALAND GARDEN**




## health and beauty

CLOCKWISE, FROM TOP LEFT  
Chocolate, cinnamon and sugar  
body scrub (see recipe on facing  
page); green tea; ground cinnamon;  
rice bran oil; vanilla extract; raw  
sugar; cocoa; citrus pectin.







## pretty potions

FROM A CHOCOLATE BODY SCRUB TO A FRUITY FACE MASK, JULIETTE WINTER EXPLAINS HOW TO CREATE SKINCARE PRODUCTS AT HOME.

PHOTOGRAPHY CRAIG WALL STYLING GERALDINE MUÑOZ

**THERE'S SOMETHING** deliciously satisfying about making your own skincare products. It's part science experiment, part culinary journey, and around the country women are cooking up their own lotions and potions — and some of them have gone on to launch brands you may now know and love.

"It took me three years and more than 300 batches to get the first lip product just perfect," says Sydney's Simone Wyndham, creator of Shizen. "I started with some common lip balm ingredients, then added and tinkered until it was a perfect balance — which is hard to achieve when you're using natural and non-synthetic ingredients."

This may sound like a lot of effort when there's boundless choice in the ready-made cosmetics market, but DIY devotees argue that homemade is as good as — or even superior to — store-bought beauty products.

"Once you experience the joy and benefits of making your own, and taking the health of your skin into your own hands, you won't look back," says Carla Oates, a Sydney-based author and founder of The Beauty Chef website. "You're getting live nutrients and enzymes that can profoundly rejuvenate the skin."

Of course, these aren't reserved for DIY — the latest luxury cream from the industry leaders may well contain plant-based antioxidants, and vitamins and minerals with regenerative benefits. As Carla points out, it's well established that "plants are rich in antioxidants to protect themselves from the environment and when we consume or apply these plants, they transfer many of the same protective benefits".

Extracting these benefits is easy enough for cosmetic scientists, but encapsulating and preserving their potency in a marketable form is a tough task. That's the advantage of making your own product — its efficacy rests on using fresh, high-quality ingredients.

"A cup of milk powder in the bath makes a wonderful bath soak — just add some flower petals!" Simone says. "Or put two drops of a flowery essential oil in a tablespoon of honey for a luxurious, nourishing face mask."

Carla also has a fine recipe — "This papaya, green tea and strawberry mask will clarify, brighten and rejuvenate your skin so it becomes glowing and radiant," she says. Just blend together  $\frac{1}{4}$  of one papaya, 3 strawberries and  $\frac{1}{3}$  cup of cooled green tea, then slowly add 3 teaspoons

of citrus pectin\* to the blender until it forms a gel-like consistency.

This can be used weekly — simply freeze leftovers in small portions in an ice-cube tray and each time you need a fresh mask, pop out a portion and thaw.

Or you could just crack open a jar of coconut oil, which is revered for its moisturising fatty acids and anti-bacterial lauric acid content. "I use it as a moisturiser, hair treatment and body cleanser in the shower — it makes the shower recess slippery, so be careful," Carla says. "It also makes a great rejuvenating treatment for your teeth and gums when swished around in your mouth."

When you're ready to try something slightly more complex, combine a tablespoon of almond meal with natural yoghurt and you've whipped up a brilliant facial exfoliant. Or mix equal parts sugar and unrefined macadamia oil, and you've got yourself a beautiful body scrub.

Carla has another scrumptious scrub made from chocolate, cinnamon and sugar. Mix together 1 cup raw sugar,  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of unrefined coconut oil or rice bran oil, 3–4 tablespoons of cocoa, 1 teaspoon of ground cinnamon and 1 teaspoon of vanilla extract. You can store this in an airtight jar for up to two months. "Body scrubs are a great way to help kickstart the lymphatic system," Carla says. "This antioxidant-rich scrub is a chocolate and sugar treat that's actually good for you!"

Sadly, many homemade beauty products don't last for long (some fruit- and vegetable-based recipes can spoil within days) but refrigeration or freezing can extend their life.

For many people who pursue DIY beauty, it's what you're *not* getting in homemade skin care that makes the process worthwhile. Chemical preservatives, parabens, sulfates and dyes are often present in commercial products to guarantee long shelf-life and desirable texture — but they can also cause irritation and other adverse reactions. "It's like cooking for yourself as opposed to buying takeaway — you know what's in it," Simone says. \*

\*Available at some health food stores and delicatessens.