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Exotic Treatments in Uncharted Territory
Exploration of Brooklyn's Latest Jewel
By **Andrea Toochin**

My last trip to Brooklyn led me to the grand opening of a 'green' restaurant in Fort Greene, Brooklyn's next yuppie family zone. Minutes from downtown, the restaurants, stores, and cultural centers explain why it's so popular but one rarely sees full-service spas like those plentiful in Midtown Manhattan. However, northern Brooklyn is now home to the latest in destination spas, **Body by Brooklyn**, a 10,000 square foot space designed by Moon Kim, which houses a spa, a bar and a restaurant.

Located on the cusp of Fort Greene, Clinton Hill and Williamsburg the 'hood is not necessarily charming, mainly because of its proximity to the BQE; around the corner from the spa warehouses and the occasional restaurant, like Mojito, a Cuban spot, fill industrial spaces while the other side is home to row houses. But, the beauty of this spa and Brooklyn as a whole, is that it's a place where people of all backgrounds feel comfortable.

Inside the frosted doors, a reception awaits in a small bright space. Upon checking in, they supply a locker key so you can store your belongings and grab a robe, towel and slippers. The locker room is a clean design with three sink areas, one section with a hairdryer, and three private showers at the end of the room near the single private toilet. I was scheduled for a body treatment, the Red Flower Sento Treatment, one of five options including the Red Flower Hammam Treatment. Since body treatment involve a lot cleansing, scrubbing and washing, the spa supplies disposable undies. This means you need to come to terms with your body before you sign on for the treatment because all you'll be wearing are black fabric underpants and a hand towel over your breasts.



Inside the wet room, there are two beds so couples can get treatments together and sliding doors to a dry room. As with all the rooms, an earthy feel is achieved through brown tones and rust colored large tiles used to line the bottom half of the walls. The wet room has rubber mats on the floors and a shower attachment they use to rinse off

soap and scrubs. Now, I'm not modest but I was a bit uncomfortable when I realized the aesthetician was a middle aged man. However, soon after I met Alexander I realized he was a sensitive professional and immediately I felt at ease. He explained the many steps to me and then began with the warm liquid soap. After washing and rinsing, he applied the ginger bamboo scrub and rinsed with hot water. I flipped over so he could soap and scrub my backside and then he brought out the herbs. From inside a heated a bowl he produced a clear mesh satchel of herbs, which he rubbed all over my body to penetrate the pores. He then covered me in many hot towels and another large towel and told me to take a catnap while the pores absorbed the herbs. Fifteen minutes later, I emerged from under the towels and moved to the connected dry room for a 40-minute massage. He applied warm oil made of Camellia, plum and rose oils, to moisturize the body and segue to a full body massage. Soothing international sounds still emanating from the CD player, he lifted the bed up and brought me a glass of ice water. I was given 10 minutes to rest and wake up before I had to vacate the room.

This was probably the second or third time in my life I've had a complete body treatment but I've had many facials and massages and this was by far the most therapeutic. At the time, I had a combination of allergies and a cold. I was congested I'd taken to carrying a roll of toilet paper in lieu of tissues. My chest was heavy and my body achy. All the soaps, scrubs and herbs employed helped clean my pores and provided a mini detox but the constant hot water also helped. I could breathe easier after the treatment and I was able to enjoy the massage without experiencing pain or falling asleep. After the treatment, my skin was softer and my muscles were looser. Even the best at-home scrubs can't compete with the results this treatment yielded.

Though my treatment was excellent, on my next visit I'd be tempted to try the Hammam Treatment. This one uses a mint cleanser; a scrub comprised of lemon, coffee and olive stone; a jasmine rose clay polish; and an orange quince mist. Then they use cardamom amber oil during the massage. Not only am I big fan of cardamom thanks to my chai obsession but fig is one of my favorite scents and the final step involves moisturizing with tangerine fig butter. These products together provide a detoxifying treatment where the Sento Treatment is a basic service to reveal soft skin.

I recognize that many people aren't drawn to body treatments or massages because they aren't comfortable with strangers touching them. The spa offers the usual treatments—nail services, waxing, and facials, including the Gentleman's Facial, a hot towel treatment designed to sooth irritation, ingrown hairs and razor bumps. An unusual menu detail shows that the waxing menu includes areas like the nose, the ears, and the stomach, and they even do ear candeling (\$50), which I'm quite curious about. Not only is their waxing menu extensive but the waxing room has a private bathroom so clients can clean up without leaving the room. As in every room, the waxing room has a clock radio CD player and clients are welcome to bring their own music.

In addition to the wet room and the waxing room, there are two dry rooms with a sliding door to accommodate singletons or couples; two facial rooms; and a large private room for rent by the hour (\$250 per hour). The private room is larger than some studio apartments, with its huge Jacuzzi, a shower with a built-in steam room, a bathroom, a huge plasma TV. Rental of the private room comes with free champagne and a choice of appetizers.

Apart from the plethora of inventive treatment options, including the B3 Oxygen Facial, which utilizes vitamin C, zinc, copper, silica and magnesium to promote cell turnover and regeneration, and algae and herbs to gently exfoliate, the lounge areas are the most exciting features of Body by Brooklyn.



The wet lounge features a small cold thermal pool set at 48 degrees and a hot thermal pool set at about 103 degrees. The wet lounge includes a Turkish steam room with a Tsunami shower, a dry cedar sauna, and a wet cedar sauna, where aestheticians perform Platza treatments. For added relaxation, the staff can add aromatherapy essences to the rocks in the dry sauna. In the common area, you'll find open showers along one wall set apart by glass dividers; once showered and fresh, patrons leave to grab a bite in the dry lounge.



In this mod-contemporary area, mocha, tan and lime green accents fuse with soft lighting and streaming sunlight; seating includes brushed metal stools and chairs, and leather benches and one subtle accent, a fireplace that'll come in handy come winter. Tables and a bar area allow space to watch the World Cup or movies on one of four plasmas TVs, while sipping homemade juice or cocktails and waiting for gourmet fare. The extensive café menu includes juices such as cran-blueberry-blackberry and fresh squeezed juices such as carrot, apple and ginger. A handful of red and white wines are available, as are three beers on tap, including Guinness. The standout dishes include the papaya and mango shrimp salad, the lamb burger, and the seafood risotto. For vegetarians or dieters, a grilled vegetable plate is available. The café also serves brunch on the weekends from noon to 5 p.m.

If you visit in the summer, be sure to visit the outside patio. The final bonus is paintings mounted throughout the spa. The artist, David Goldin, son of the owners, has offered patrons the luxury of a gallery viewing inside a spa. Though his landscape paintings are intriguing, the portraits are the true gems. His style varies; some portraits are reminiscent of Modigliani's lines while others resemble realist portraits of urban characters, perhaps a fusion of the subjects that inspired Jean-Michel Basquiat and John Currin.

Whether you visit for a treatment, the grub or the art, you'll definitely leave satisfied. This oasis will surely draw locals and those willing to trek across a bridge for pampering and enlightenment thanks to the membership option. If you don't want a treatment, but you'd like to visit the wet lounge the access fee is \$40, or \$35 if you buy a pack of 11 visits for \$385. My visit revealed a wonderful mix of people using the facilities from middle aged men to heterosexual couples and a pair of young men we'd normally label as suits. So, what did I learn on my trip to Body by Brooklyn? 1. Don't label people. 2. Trust Alexander. 3. Save some money because you'll need it once you become addicted to the papaya salad and fresh carrot juice at BBB.

Body by Brooklyn is located at 275 Park Avenue on the corner of Washington Street, 718.923.9400, www.bodybybrooklyn.com.