



## Glorious Glow

Today's alpha hydroxy acids may be the key to giving your clients the results they desire.

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ALTHOUGH THE SPA INDUSTRY IS CONSTANTLY evolving, what hasn't changed is the growing popularity of anti-aging treatments. The eternal quest for the fountain of youth remains a top priority for many spa-goers. Alpha hydroxy acids (AHA), a group of chemical compounds derived from fruit, milk, and sugar, have proven to be a key weapon in the fight against aging and have long been touted for their ability to smooth fine lines, unclog pores, refine texture, and improve the overall condition of the skin. "AHAs have been used as an exfoliation technique dating back to the era of Cleopatra and the use of milk baths," says Aneta Merlino, spa manager at **The Spaahh** at Hotel 1000 (Seattle),

where a Glycolic Peel Facial (\$115, 60 minutes) and a Glycolic Peel Add-on (\$20) are staples of the menu. Today, no spa menu is complete without at least one AHA-based service incorporating fruit, glycolic, lactic, or other available acids that treat a variety of skin conditions.

According to dermatologist Craig Austin, M.D., AHAs are ideal for use in spa treatments, as they both exfoliate and hydrate the skin. Julia Hunter, M.D., dermatologist and founder of **Skin-Fitness Plus** (Beverly Hills, CA), is a fan of acids that exfoliate in a healthy manner. "I love lactic, malic, and tartaric acids, as the body has receptors for these chemicals," says Hunter. "Therefore, it recognizes them and creates positive, not negative, effects." For instance, the **Bioelements Lactic-Plus Peel** (\$115, 60 minutes) at **Sister's Skin Care and Waxing** (Chicago) smoothes fine lines and wrinkles, improves dull and lifeless skin, and restores elasticity. Ideal for thick skin, the treatment can be customized five different ways to create a mild to ultimate peeling-strength action.

Glycolic, the most popular of all acids, generates its fair share of debate. Because it doesn't have a receptor in the body and can trigger inflammation, Hunter isn't a fan. In fact, she cautions that glycolic acid should never be used on thin, dry, and mature skin because it can cause telangiectasia, also known as dilated blood vessels of the skin. For others, glycolic is the acid of choice. "I think glycolic acid is the best because it is the smallest molecule and can penetrate the skin more easily than other AHAs, such as lactic or malic acid," says Austin. "Glycolic acid also attracts water, so it not only exfoliates but also hydrates and rejuvenates the skin."

At the **Spa at Alderbrook** at Alderbrook Resort & Spa (Union, WA), guests can opt for either the **Resurface "C" Facial** (\$160, 90 minutes), which includes a 40 percent glycolic peel combined with vitamin C, or the **Age Renewal Treatment Peel Facial** (\$160, 90 minutes), which involves a lactic acid-based peel combined with lidebenone, a potent antioxidant. "Generally, most guests have something they would love to improve about their skin," says spa director Elizabeth Russell. "Whether they are looking to address fine lines and wrinkles, dullness, or a general loss of firmness to the skin, a series of alpha hydroxy treatments is a perfect way

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