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An Exciting New Line of Beauty Products

Lisa Kaaki | Special to Review —

ENAM Bagedo, an enterprising Saudi scientist, created Bayan Loutra, a line of natural beauty products in 2001. The Bayan Loutra luxurious skincare range is available at the iconic Liberty's of London and at her newly opened shop in central London. They are also available exclusively at Luthan Spa in Riyadh.

Enam acknowledges that it would have been easy for her to set up her business in Saudi Arabia but she feels that the real excitement for her is to teach other cultures the wonderful beauty secrets she learned in the Kingdom: "London is a vibrant city, a melting pot of cultures. By basing my business in London, I can tap into this every day, learning something new. I find this inspiring and I believe this shows in the products I have to offer, as well as those I am developing for the future," she explains.

After obtaining a degree in pharmaceutical chemistry at Kent University, she studied Chinese medicine in London, homeopathy in Greece and finally medicinal plants at Bristol University: "I find cosmetics a creative way to use my scientific knowledge." She spent many years researching and analyzing the formulation of each Bayan Loutra product and devoted three years just to designing and sourcing the materials for the packaging.

Born and raised in Saudi Arabia, Enam Bagedo recalls with fondness how her grandmother believed in natural medicine and taught her how to take care of her body: "This was a valuable lesson passed to me by my grandmother and it is the driving force behind Bayan. It seemed natural to incorporate ingredients sourced in Saudi Arabia, and I wanted to share their benefits with the rest of the world. The almond oil, orange flower and cornstarch are all sourced in the Kingdom. Other ingredients sourced in Saudi Arabia, such as cardamom oil, the oil of the Taif rose and black seed oil, and the various elements present in the post-natal bath, all provided inspiration for my beauty products. Through my scientific knowledge, I found the best way to incorporate these ingredients into modern cosmetics, thus opening them up to a new and international audience."

She admits that there is no scientific basis for using cardamom but it conjures images of the Bedouin. In Arab countries, the Bedouin traditionally add cardamom to flavor their coffee and cardamom seeds are chewed to clean the teeth and freshen the breath: "For this reason it seemed an obvious choice to use when creating a lip balm," she says.

One of her most interesting products is a rich body cream laced with black seed oil. Black seeds or *Nigella sativa*, an excellent antioxidant, have been used for centuries, both as an herb and pressed into oil for medicinal purposes by people in the Middle East, Asia and Africa. They have been traditionally used for a variety of conditions and treatments related to respiratory health, stomach and intestinal health, kidney and liver function, circulatory and immune system support, and for general overall well-being. Black seeds are even mentioned in the Hadith, the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). The Prophet Muhammad once stated that the black seed can heal every disease except death.

The post-natal bath is particularly popular among Arab women even if they are not pregnant. Two of its main components are oak bark and acacia. Oak bark contains tannin known for its astringent and antiseptic qualities. It is also valuable for tightening tissues. According to Bagedo, the leaves, flowers and pods of the acacia have been used for centuries in order to stop bleeding and heal wounds. Moreover, its strong astringent action is used to contract and toughen mucous membranes throughout the body in much the same way as oak bark.

The Bayan Cornstarch Kit is also well-liked thanks to its soothing properties upon the skin. Generations of Saudi mothers taught their daughters how this simple product can alleviate the pain of a severe heat rash. The cornstarch is mixed with rose water to create a most refreshing face mask.

Bagedo has included several kits in her range of products. Her Greek Salt Kit is a best seller in the U.K. While she was studying homeopathy in Greece, she was introduced to the technique of massaging salty water into the skin. The salt which comes from Greek rock pools is mixed with a blend of oils to exfoliate dead skin cells. "I think customers enjoy the making time for themselves, creating a ritual and the process of mixing the Greek salt with the scrub oil. Of course, the mother of pearl dishes and spoons also add to the sense of luxury," she admits.

Bayan products are aimed at the high end of the market, at people who are ready to pay more for the best quality and are also intelligent enough to look beyond the empty promises of marketing campaigns and seek the truth when it comes to taking proper care of their bodies. The raw materials used are among the best in the world and can sometimes only be produced in small quantities. The jasmine oil and the jasmine paste come from one acre which only produces 10 ml of jasmine oil and less than 8g of jasmine paste.

"I find it sad that the current market is awash with cheaply made products that contain harmful and unnatural chemical ingredients. They are mixed with chemicals such as sodium laureth sulphate, propylene glycol and many other agents that allow manufacturers to make a little go a long way. These are then stamped with claims of reducing wrinkles and tightening up the skin. Skin is a natural substance itself and will not act on other chemicals being rubbed into it. It is more likely to react negatively to constant changes in its chemical balance. It is my hope that, instead of looking for a quick solution to their beauty needs, be it anti-ageing creams or the more extreme cosmetic surgery, that the consumer will instead give themselves time for beauty rituals. We should be teaching our children the value of caring for your skin and body from a young age. After all, a healthy lifestyle is the secret to your beauty," she concludes. She is currently developing a range of Bayan products for men and she also hopes to launch a cosmetics line in the near future.

For more info: www.bayanloutra.co.uk

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