

# European Spa

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## KERSTIN FLORIAN

Meet the mother and daughter behind the global brand

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A new business philosophy at the revitalised UK spa



“Kerstin has been an incredible mentor to me and taught me so much about product formulation and the history and essence of true spa therapy”

**Charlene Florian**  
Kerstin Florian International

# Get up & glow

European Spa meets dynamic mother and daughter team Kerstin and Charlene Florian, to hear more about how spa company Kerstin Florian International, is riding the wellness wave

[ Interview by Sarah Camilleri ]

A passion for preventative health and skincare innovation courses through the Swedish dynasty behind international spa brand Kerstin Florian. This progressive, California-based company, started in 1978 by enterprising esthetician Kerstin, has evolved over time into Kerstin Florian International (KFI), an internationally recognised brand with approximately 450 four and five-star spa accounts in 35 countries.

The seeds of Kerstin's vision were planted when she opened her own day spa at Surf and Sand Hotel in Laguna Beach, California. This soon caught the attention of lifestyle glossies such as *Harper's Bazaar*, *Vogue* and *W* magazine.

"Spa is a different way to think – it's a lifestyle," says Kerstin. "It was not just about delivering body treatments and massages; back in 1978 we were already working with our four cornerstones: diet and nutrition; exercise; psychological wellbeing; and treatments."

Kerstin's determination to offer a menu of face and body treatments that harnessed natural products was quite unique at the time. Encouraged by the positive response from her clients, she drafted in a Swiss chemist and began formulating her own natural product range. The journey had started to create a distinctive and dedicated global spa brand.

### A new generation

Today, Kerstin's daughter Charlene carries on her mother's vision as the company's chief creative officer. Leading an extensive team of spa educators, distributors and support teams worldwide, her quest for wellness knowledge takes her all over the world in search of new ingredients, healing techniques and ancient therapies, to help shape the direction and composition of the brand's products and treatments.

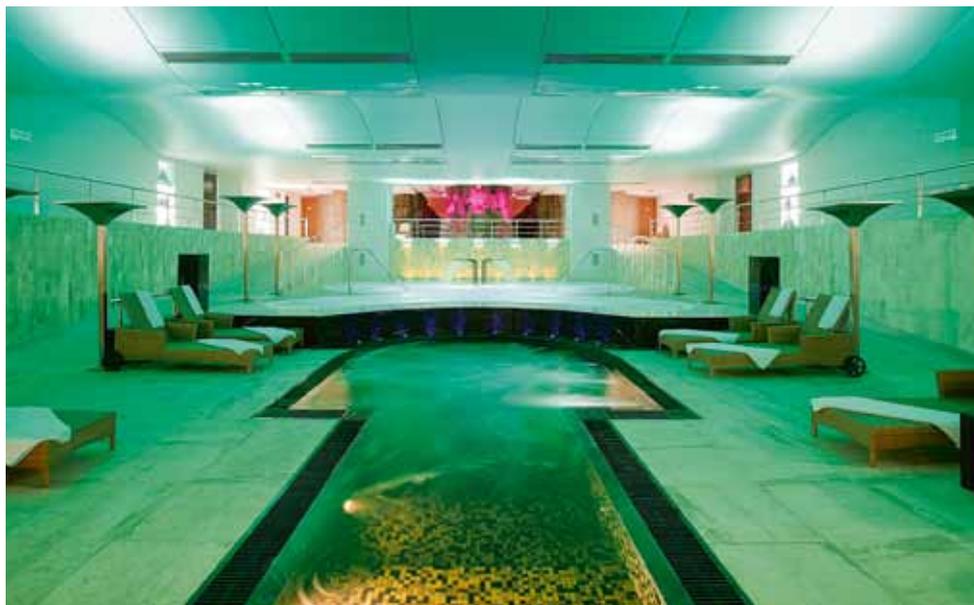
"Kerstin has been an incredible mentor to me and taught me so much about product formulation and the history and essence of true spa therapy," says Charlene. "Today, our products can be found exclusively in four and five-star resort, destination and day spas – which makes us a true spa brand."

"Importantly, our company still runs like a family and we love to build this kind of relationship with our spa partners across the world, supporting them through extensive onsite education, such as retail and advanced training modules; online information; webinars; events; marketing and PR support. We have every tool necessary from testers, samples and travel programs to kits, gifts, locker room amenities, extensive manuals and spa advisor support."

From left: Kerstin Florian and her daughter Charlene Florian; the company recently completed an extensive re-packaging and re-branding exercise



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**Clockwise from above left:** Kerstin Florian recently revitalised a hammam experience at Richmond Nua Wellness, Turkey; the brand's products are used during a treatment at the Headland Spa, Newquay, UK; Kerstin Florian's core line, the Essentials Skincare Collection

The brand's agenda for delivering perfect spa treatments is a similarly holistic one. "We believe the ultimate spa experience begins with the spa philosophy and menu," elaborates Kerstin. "It comes from connecting all the departments together – the sensory experience, the welcome and check in, the retail layout, the waiting area and the treatment itself."

**Inspired by nature**

Charlene has dedicated her career to pairing sensory spa experiences with results-driven products. "Researching plants is my passion and being able to blend them for optimum harmony and benefit is a milestone for me," she explains. "Nature inspires me. We now offer over 100 products and a complete menu of facials, baths, body scrubs, body wraps, foot and hand treatments and rituals."

"Our products are a blend of high quality plant-derived ingredients with elements such as peptides, hyaluronic acid, vitamin C, glycolic, phytic, lactic and salicylic acid. We also use the latest technology in our K-Lift Age-Management system, based on red LED light, impulse micro-current and transdermal delivery to really get the best results."

**Turkish delight**

One of the newest spas to seek the expertise of KFI, is Richmond Nua Wellness in Turkey, a pioneering destination spa run by Richmond International. "We had an amazing opportunity to work with Belgin Aksoy to redesign the Richmond Nua Wellness Spa's menu and retail area," reveals Charlene.

"Belgin and her team are deep into wellness and their philosophy is very much aligned with ours. Their expert therapists attend to guests with personalised treatment programmes, including massage, Kerstin Florian facials and extensive rituals."

One of the highlights for the KFI team was to include a new signature hammam experience for the Turkish spa. "It's quite unique," states Charlene, "retaining all the artistry of traditional hammam, but using our beautiful essential oils, floral waters and moisturisers. Of course, we have been very careful not to take away from the established tradition, but hopefully, have enhanced it by elevating the guest experience and results."

**Skin that glows**

Charlene is a firm believer that the skin is a barometer of the body. "In many cases, skin conditions stem from imbalances in the diet," she explains. "Also, if you are tired, stressed or have been eating food that is unusual or not right for your body – it shows in the skin, but we can't just talk about skincare in isolation. We believe that beautiful skin comes as a result of proper nutrition, regular exercise, peace of mind and taking care of the face and body."

"Our message to spa goers is that if you use great quality skincare products and make a commitment to a healthy lifestyle, you will get the results you want."

**Refreshed and comprehensive**

The Kerstin Florian team has just completed a comprehensive, four-year re-branding and re-packaging exercise that began with its high-end Caviar range, followed by Correcting Skincare, Essentials Skincare and was recently completed with additions to the Essentials Body Care line.

"As we had seen such success with our Correcting Skincare line we decided to develop a Correcting Body Care line with the focus on brightening and toning," explains Charlene. "This resulted in four new offerings and we also developed some new Essentials Body Care products."





From top: Kerstin Florian treatments are available at the Dorchester Spa, London; the Correcting line is the company's fastest growing brand

Sustainability has always been important and improving on this was a key factor in the re-branding. "We reduced outer carton packaging significantly and opted for even more recyclable materials. We have continued the use of soy ink printing on paper from certified sustainable forests. We also continue to partner with a carbon-neutral printing house," reveals Charlene. "Our face and body oils are USDA-certified organic and we use organic ingredients such as wild-crafted mud, salts and algae in our products."

#### Complete range

Kerstin Florian currently offers an all-encompassing range of products for face and body. "Our Caviar collection is our most exclusive range, based on sustainably farmed caviar that is rich in nutrients, Chinese herbs, vitamins, algae and green tea to help aging skin," explains Charlene.

"Our Correcting line is our fastest growing brand, with focused solutions for all skin types," adds Kerstin. "It contains plant-derived ingredients with a focus

on cosmeceuticals like, hyaluronic acid, multi-acid complex and vitamin C, as well as turmeric, mushrooms and algae.

"Our Essentials Skincare Collection is a core brand, offering daily skin nutrition in the form of many super nutrient-rich plants like spirulina, aloe vera and mineral-rich moor mud.

"Essentials Body Care, which contains a complete range of

natural resources, features bath gels, lotions, baths and essential oils to balance, moisturise, tone and nourish the skin. We also have a sun range and a dedicated product range for men," she concludes.

#### Reconnecting with the source

KFI's product innovation and spa training aims to marry the best therapeutic techniques with its hi-tech skincare formulations. "Our direction as a company is to move further into wellness. We believe that adopting a 'wellness' lifestyle creates beautiful skin," says Charlene. "One of our new treatments, which we launch this December, is a magnesium wrap. Magnesium performs hundreds of important functions in the body, but many people are deficient and the best way to absorb it is through the skin."

"We are also seeing spa guests really reconnecting with bathing," adds Kerstin. "Once they have worked through all the fluffy stuff they are coming full circle back to the basics of what spa is really all about – the bath and what you use in that bath," she smiles.

"Our new Mineral Wellness Soak is a really unique bathing experience, designed to re-mineralise the skin and ease muscles and joints," adds Charlene. "Hand-harvested from the South Atlantic and solar dried, the salts are loaded with over 60 different minerals and trace elements which are essential for skin. The health benefits are effortless; as you bathe your skin takes up the minerals you need."

#### A sustainable future

While KFI's long-term aim is to include even more organic ingredients in its products and further strengthen its commitment to sustainability, the brand must also try to satisfy spa guests' changing needs.

"We appeal to spa goers interested in skin wellness and a healthy lifestyle," says Charlene. "Today, we see two types of guest: one with a desire for quality, natural products that are sustainable; the other looking for products that provide immediate results. Sometimes these people are one and the same.

"Wellness in the next era will be all about sustainability: staying in touch with nature, using technology to make the most of quality, super-nutrient, plant-based ingredients," says Charlene. "We also see potential in the growth of corporate wellness and have just launched our new Corporate Retreat Program. We will also continue to use social media to educate people about skin wellness and overall wellbeing."

For Kerstin her mission remains the same as it was in 1978. "We need spa more than ever," she says. "The message is to recognise that preventative health is like saving up for a rainy day – you hope it will not come, but if it does you will reap the benefits."



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