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35 WAYS TO SPICE UP YOUR WORLD

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BY ANY MEANS NECESSARY

BEAUTY

The first time I got a body wrap, I wasn't exactly sure what I was "getting into," if you catch my drift. A friend of mine had set up an appointment for me to get a Clème Fraîche-Cocoa Butter Wrap, and who am I to look such an exotic gift horse in the mouth? At the chichi Brigitte Mansfield European Day Spa, in New York City, I was whisked into a treatment room with Dorota, a spa therapist. After declining a paper bikini, I was instructed to take off my clothes and lie facedown on a plastic-covered massage table. As I lay there waiting for Dorota to reenter the room, I felt a little "butt naked." After all, I was used to the subtle draping you get during a massage. But once Dorota came back and began the first step of the exclusive treatment—slathering me all over with an almond body exfoliant and a glacial salt rub—I simply went with the flow.

After she hand-buffed every inch of dead skin off my body in an invigorating massage, I was sent to the showers. Then it was time for the actual wrap: Dorota massaged in the crème fraîche mixture, then covered me in plastic and foil, and spread a heating thermo-blanket over me. Cool pads were placed on my eyes, soothing music played, and Dorota left the room. After 30 minutes, she returned and gently unwrapped me. Once again she sent me to the showers. Back at the table, Dorota rubbed me all over with a caviar-based moisturizer (which smelled like yummy cocoa butter), then sent me on my way. On the bus ride home, I checked out my skin—it felt softer and looked healthier than I could remember. As if that weren't enough to turn me into a confirmed body-wrap believer, the man next to me commented that I smelled nice. I was hooked. Given the cost involved in our rendezvous (most body wraps cost between \$60 and \$150), Dorota and I don't meet nearly as often as I would like. But there's always another gift horse...

[To find a day or destination spa in your area that offers wraps, visit www.heartandsoul.com.]

Body wrap basics

What's a body wrap? "Any treatment that involves being wrapped or covered in a material that helps your body absorb beneficial ingredients and discard toxins," explains April Amstutz, massage manager at Canyon Ranch Health Resort



in Tucson, Ariz. "The skin is a vital organ. It takes in nutrients and shows problems like acne or flakiness if there's something wrong in the body," says Brigitte Mansfield, owner of the Brigitte Mansfield European Day Spa. That's why when you get a wrap, your whole body is being treated—it's just happening through the skin. So no matter what's applied to your body, if you're covered up and left to "marinate," consider it a wrap.

Wrapper's delight

Old-school wraps have been around since the days of Cleopatra and her goat's-milk baths. "In the olden days, it was almost like

you were mummified in thin strips of fabric soaked in essential oils or herbal mixtures," says Gabrielle Ophals, co-owner of Haven spa in Soho. "They used them for size reduction, which was essentially water loss. Those types of wraps still exist, but many people don't like being wrapped so tightly." To others, these traditional wraps feel very natural. "Our more classic body wrap, with herbal linen cloths, can be very medicinal," says Mansfield. The rosemary-leaf wrap is believed to have antiseptic powers for problems like acne; it also is said to encourage cell turnover. The old spiceberry wrap is thought to bolster perspiration. And the eucalyptus wrap may also have antiseptic properties. "To me, this type of wrap is very natural. That's why I like to use natural fibers with it," says Mansfield.

New-school wraps use high-tech materials that don't require as much wrapping to retain your body heat. "Now we're also using materials like plastic and Mylar, a type of foil," says Ophals. "You can wrap Mylar around the body just twice, and your own body heat will reflect back to you." If you're even the tiniest bit claustrophobic, this might be a better choice for you than traditional cloth wraps, because plastic and Mylar wraps are not very tight. And, maybe it's just me, but there's something childlike and fun about sliding around in all that slippery plastic.

What's in a wrap?

Before you're all wrapped up like a newborn, waiting for your skin to take a tender turn, it's likely that you'll be rubbed down with "yummyfying" ingredients. The nourishing goodies are usually seaweed or algae blends, mud or clay mixtures, and moisturizing cream and oil

Beauty bath and beyond:

1. **Serious pleasure:** Jonathan Baker CHI Pure Aromatherapy Candle in (Energy) formula.
2. **Polynesian beauty:** Aida Thibault Tahitian Shower Milk Luxurious Conditioning Body Shampoo Enriched with Monoi Extract.
3. **Soap's best replacement:** Pratima Ayurvedic Skin Care Herbal Body Mask.
4. **Sensitive skin soother:** Pratima Ayurvedic Skin Care Dehya Balancing Oil in Pitta formula.
5. **Tropical delight:** Aida Thibault Tahitian Milk Bath Enriched with Monoi Extract.
6. **Soothe yourself:** Jonathan Baker's CHI Pure Aromatherapy Bath & Body Oil in (Energy) formula.
7. **After-bath boost:** Phytoner Ferment Tonic Firming Body Cream.
8. **Face therapy:** Archipelago Belinicals Mineral Face Mask Mud.
9. **For face and throat:** Darghese Tasse Di Mentacrine Soe Fango Delicate Active Mud for Delicate Dry Skin.
10. **Hydration helper:** Susan Cimirelli Marine Lotion with Algae Oil & Essential Oils.