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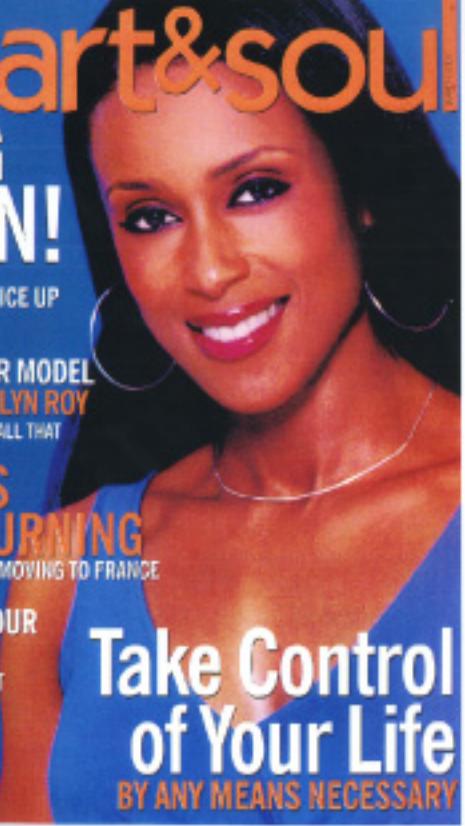
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BEAUTY

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 Crème Frâiche Cocoa Butter Wrap, and who am I to look such an exotic gift horse in the mouth? At the chic! Brigitte Mansfield European Day Spa, in New York City, I was whisked into a treatment room with Dorota, a skin therapist. After donning a paper bikini, I was instructed to take off my clothes and lie face down 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 a mind-body exfoliant and a glacial salt rub—I simply went with the flow.

After she hand-buffered 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 frâiche 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 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 (mind-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 discards 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 Spas. 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 Gabriele 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 "yummifying" ingredients. The nourishing goodies are usually seaweed or algae blends, mud or clay mixtures, and moisturizing cream and oil