

Narelle Chenery

Australia's green beauty guru and mother of three Narelle Chenery, 38, swears by homemade, organic beauty concoctions. We catch up with the founder of natural beauty brand Miessence to discover her secrets to organic and healthy living.

What inspired you to make products from your kitchen stove?

When I discovered the products I was using that I thought were [claiming to be] 'natural' actually were just chemicals in disguise, I was inspired to find a product that was the real deal. When everything I looked at was more of the same, I was inspired to see what I could create myself.

The first product I made was an astringent after-shave. I macerated a bunch of fresh herbs, berries, spices and flowers into witch hazel, orange blossom water, aloe vera and glycerin. I kept it in a big jar on my kitchen window sill for about six weeks and strained it through cheesecloth into little bottles. I gave one of them to my uncle, who suffered from bad shave rash, and it cured him. I knew I was onto a winner from then on!

What are some of your favourite ingredients when cooking up your own at-home beauty treatments and why are they your favourite?

You can't go past a simple salt body polish! Choose the grade of salt that you can handle (fine or coarse) and add enough coconut oil – or whatever yummy oil appeals to you – to make a wet paste that's not too oily, then add enough essential oils to make it smell delicious. I stand in the bath or shower recess and rub it all over my body until I'm nice and pink, and then rinse it off just enough to remove the salt but leave the lovely aromatic oil. Don't dry off with a towel, try to drip dry, or lightly pat dry without removing the moisturising residue. It leaves your skin pink, smooth and glowing! Fabulous to do before a night on the town.

Why is it important we use natural or organic beauty products?

Unfortunately, 'natural' means nothing for beauty products these days... even the term 'organic' is copping a beating. The only way to guarantee you're using real organic products is to look for the logo of organic certification on the label.

We need to go real organic for so many reasons:

- To avoid toxins disguised as fake 'natural' ingredients.
- To support farmers and companies in the ethical and sustainable use of the earth's resources.
- To support the few beacons of integrity among the plethora of fake natural and organic products.

- To enjoy products that are truly safe, effective and beautiful.

How has your skin benefited from the use of organic skincare products?

My skin has definitely improved over the last 15 years of using my own creations. The texture, the elasticity, the tone, the and the translucence of my complexion have all improved.

Why should we not limit our lifestyles to simply an organic beauty range? Is organic living (organic house and garden products, etc) more beneficial for our health and wellness?

Health and wellness is not just about the products we apply externally, it's about how we nourish and cleanse our bodies, and how we keep our environment clean. I ate organic foods before I started making organic skincare products in my kitchen. A multi-faceted approach brings the most powerful and synergistic results.

Why is an organic lifestyle important to you?

Eating organic whole foods and using only organic products for my body and home makes me feel connected to the earth. I feel healthy, energised, nourished and focused. I'm definitely more capable of dealing with hyper-stress. My body has enough to deal with without the added burden of artificial and processed foods, toxic chemicals in my bathroom cabinet, kitchen and laundry. It's much more harmonising to smell essential oils in my house than awful synthetic fragrances from chemical, store-bought products.

It must be tough to juggle your health commitments with raising your three children and managing a business at the same time. How do you do it and what gets you through?

Regular exercise, whole food diet, pure water, fresh air and a loving connection with my friends and family... what more does one need? NH

Miessence can be purchased online from www.miessence.com or telephone (07) 5539 2011 for your local stockist or direct orders

