



Going Organic Jinny Lee Polish on Piedmont Nail and Skin Spa

Jinny Lee had often wondered why, if people cared so much what went *into* their body, wouldn't they be equally concerned with what went *on* it.

Taking care of the skin you're in is the concept behind her spa, Polish on Piedmont. Lee, the founder and owner, moved from Los Angeles and opened the organic nail and skin day spa on Oakland's trendy Piedmont Avenue in 2003.

From the moment you step inside the spa, the traffic and noise of Piedmont Avenue disappear, replaced by the tranquil sounds of fluttering birds and visions of light sky-blue walls. Products line the shelves offering the latest in organic treatments.

"We want to heal the skin, rather than have it react to chemicals," says 31-year-old Lee, her own delicate Asian features accentuated by flawlessly radiant skin.

Starting with a small staff and putting in 12-hour days, she worked hard to recreate the kind of spa she had operated in LA and to establish herself as an important part of the community. Her efforts paid off. Her

staff expanded to a team of nearly a dozen, and her clients have become regulars.

"We want to create a meaningful experience," she says. "I instruct my staff to go beyond the treatment. Sometimes customers need to talk about what's going on in their lives, the issues they have. We invite them to speak freely as a way of healing themselves."

House specialties include the spa's signature organic facial, complete with "oodles" of massage and a warm milk and pumpkin pedicure that smells like "baking from grandma's kitchen."

Lee uses two main companies, one Hungarian and the other Swiss, to supply most of her products. She does extensive research to determine the composition and percentage of organic materials before allowing them into her store. Even the time of day at which the organic ingredients are cut and which part of the stem they are culled from is vital to assuring their highest potency, she insists.

First-time customer and Oakland resident Joseph Offenberg says he was thrilled with his recent facial and pedicure. "I like the fact that they took the time to ask me questions to find out about my particular skin and skin-care regime. There were no prior assumptions."

Offenberg says he was particularly impressed with his pedicure and fondly recalled sitting with his feet in a tub of eucalyptus base while sipping organic tea and honey. A heated flax and vanilla shoulder wrap further helped to ease away the tension of the day.

The name itself, Polish on Piedmont, refers to much more than nail polish. It's a metaphor, Lee says, about polishing one's life. "Of course, we physically polish and clean the body, but we also aren't afraid to help a person polish their personal life as well."

Polish on Piedmont Nail and Skin Spa, 4319 Piedmont Ave., (510) 601-0909, www.polishspa.com, open Tuesday-Sunday, prices from \$35 for a spa pedicure to \$120 for an 80-minute facial.