

BEAT

blame it on brazil

Blowouts and butt lifts, bikini waxes and body oils—SAVITA IYER-AHRESTANI discovers that all things Brazilian are the biggest beauty buzzwords

Brazilian supermodel Isabela Fontana in *Vogue India*, October 2011



Jonice Padilha has an important piece of advice for women getting a Brazilian wax for the first time: “You should probably drink a couple glasses of wine before.”

Padilha, co-owner of New York’s famous J. Sisters Salon (the premier New York City institution for any kind of Brazilian beauty treatment), is one of seven siblings; since 1994, they have been successfully convincing women of the Brazilian bikini

wax’s merits, and are solely responsible for elevating an everyday beauty ritual in their homeland to an international must-do. Their 57th Street salon—a hopping, bopping place where friendly beauticians from places like Salvador de Bahia and Vitória are always ready with a hug—is frequented by a roster of celebrities that include Uma Thurman, Gwyneth Paltrow and Sarah Jessica Parker, all of whom have given free rein to the

experienced hands of Jonice, her sisters and a group of Brazilian waxers.

THE WAX

Padilha is quite the Brazilian wax hardliner. She believes that it is the single most important beauty procedure for a woman. Pain be damned—you'll get used to it, she says, and you should, because if your beauty regimen doesn't include the Brazilian bikini wax, it is incomplete... meaningless, even. "If you want to be beautiful inside and out, you have to do the bikini wax," she states firmly.

"In Brazil, it's hot all year long and we're always in tiny bikinis," Padilha says. When you subject yourself to the Brazilian, she explains, you become a completely free woman, released from the shackles of inhibition, ready to bare yourself at any moment (if that's what you want to do) in a traffic-stopping micro bikini.

The deft hands of these ladies are quick with the soft, pine-oil-based wax (which is made in the salon), and in record time your most intimate part can be manicured into any shape you want: a landing strip, a heart for Valentine's Day, or the first letter of your boyfriend's name.

But Padilha insists the Brazilian is much more than a fashion statement or a means to a teeny-tiny-bathing-suit end (interestingly, Brazilians are okay with hair on their thighs and arms). For her, it's a process that results in the ultimate feminine self-confidence that every woman should feel. Are Brazilian women more confident than the rest of us? Do they have some kind of *je ne sais quoi* that we don't? Or is it really just about the wax? Certainly, there's something to be said for the fact that women the world over are increasingly benchmarking themselves against the *de facto* international beauty standard that Brazil has set.

THE BEAUTY

Beauty is pretty much viewed as a fundamental right in Brazil, the quest for which is never-ending and so much a part of the culture that the less economically fortunate can get financial assistance for plastic surgery, and several clinics offer free or dis-

counted surgery and procedures. In the world's second biggest market for plastic surgery after America, there is no stigma attached to artificial enhancements or augmentations.

Whether real or fake, there's no question that the Brazilian woman's attributes are aspirational. Workouts like Brazilian fitness maestro Leandro Carvalho's Brazil Butt Lift are the rage in New York—Carvalho trains some of the Victoria's Secret Angels for photo shoots and the fashion show.

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BRAZILIAN leg gloss
Kate Logan Beauty

Top: Brazilian beauty has inspired fitness DVDs, tell-all books and beauty products. Left: Vogue India's September 2009 cover with Brazilian supermodel Gisele Bündchen

For those unwilling to sweat it out, the Brazilian booty is still within easy reach, thanks to Brazilian and international plastic surgeons who suction fat from parts of the body and reinject it into the posterior. The procedure, involving hundreds of injections, aims to plump the upper quadrant of the buttocks to lift the derriere.

The ultimate Brazilian look, though, focuses on enhancing the natural and cultivating beauty that's lean and clean. The Brazilian pedicure, at the J. Sisters Salon for instance, is a two-hour process involving a thorough scrubbing down of corns and calluses with the end goal of enabling the natural strength of the nails. The result is super-soft heels and squeaky-clean toenails that are more resistant to chipping.

THE BOUNTY

Brazil is also a land blessed with an abundance of fruits, flowers and berries that are used in skin and hair products. Maracujá, or passionflower, is native to the Amazon and found only in Brazil, Paraguay and parts of Argentina. Used in body oil and cosmetics—it's in the cheek and lip tints in make-up brand Tarte's Maracuja Collection—it delivers an instant elixir to the skin, rendering it baby-soft.

If you want legs and arms aglow like the sun-kissed limbs of the girls who heat up Rio's beaches, try products with Brazil nut oil, a key ingredient in Kate Logan Beauty's Brazilian Leg Gloss. The açai berry boasts antioxidant properties so superior that it's risen to the rank of super-food. Açai is also used in a range of beauty care from conditioners to lip balms, and is a key ingredient in various keratin-based hair-smoothing treatments that are so popular, like the Brazilian Blow-out. The procedure—which involves the application of a smoothing product that's sealed in with the heat of a flat iron—had caused controversy because of the formaldehyde (a known carcinogen) content in the products. Today's keratin-based straighteners are more natural and less damaging, though the hazards of the original version didn't stop women all over the world from sampling yet another of Brazil's beauty innovations. ■