

WWD FRIDAY

Beauty

Kimberly Sayer's Organic Growth

By Molly Prior

NEW YORK — Kimberly Sayer, a U.K.-born aesthetician, traded London for Manhattan to create her namesake organic skin care line. Her reasoning? "Americans love the underdog," declared Sayer, who introduced her collection, Kimberly Sayer of London, three years ago. In that same spirit, U.S. retailers seem to have a fondness for small, fledging brands, increasingly adding them to their mixes.

In the interest of wooing a specialty chain and expanding her reach, Sayer has revamped her 17-item collection, ditching its original black-and-white labels in favor of color-coded tabs and matte silver caps.

The effort includes updating the paraben-free, organic formulas with a natural preservative system of Japanese honeysuckle and botanicals, and the addition of All-in-One Invigorating Lemon Scrub for the face and body.

"I want to offer people luxury organics," said Sayer, whose interest in natural products stems from her grandmother, who would pluck flowers and herbs from the family's organic garden for her handmade lotions.

While working as an aesthetician here and in London, Sayer began blending her own organic concoctions in treatment rooms. Her clients asked to take them home, although without preservatives, the mixtures would spoil after a few days. Sayer spent the next seven years finding the right formula and a chemist who could stabilize the natural ingredients.

Sayer launched her line at Henri Bendel in 2003, and during the products' three-year run there, she set up shop in Whole Foods Market's Chelsea store and a handful of spas and boutiques. Since then, Whole Foods, which launches products regionally, has rolled out the line in its beauty and wellness area, Whole Body, to stores in the Northeast and, more recently, Southern California.

Sayer is negotiating with the grocer to distribute her wares to Whole Foods' London flagship, slated to open early 2007. She said she is also speaking with another U.K. retailer about a potential partnership.

Sayer makes regular appearances in Whole Foods stores, giving shoppers mini facials and trumpeting her skin care line.

Over the last year, Whole Foods has worked to remind its shoppers that it is in the beauty business by hosting in-store events and cross-merchandising beauty throughout the store. Sayer said that prior to the promotional activity surrounding Whole Body, Whole Foods' research indicated that one in every 10 customers shopped the Whole Body department.

Her products are also sold in a handful of indie boutiques such as Soap Sisters in Berkeley, Calif., and Blush Beauty Bar in Portland, Ore.

Prices range from \$25 for the soy-based Gentle Cleansing Lotion to \$75 for the Vitamin C Serum Gel. Most items are in the \$38 range, such as Cellular Extract Eye Lift Gel, which features Plant Psuedocollagen, a patented ingredient designed to bind moisture to cells and create firmer-looking skin.

With the new packaging — slated to roll out this month — behind her, Sayer has turned her attention to the spa channel and plans to attend the International Spa Association's annual conference this fall. Kimberly Sayer of London is available in 40 doors and generates \$750,000 in revenues. Sayer expects the packaging revamp to secure extra doors and push sales to \$5 million to \$6 million by the end of 2007.

In addition to her products, Sayer has a private aesthetics practice and travels to clients' homes or hotels. Her clients include Paula Abdul, when she's in town.



Items from the revamped Kimberly Sayer of London.

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