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## Spa therapies blending high-tech with tradition

BETH J. HARPAZ, Associated Press

Updated 11:06 p.m., Monday, August 29, 2011

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This Thursday, Aug. 18, 2011 photo shows a woman as she receives a Chakra Garden Massage in the Aspira Spa booth of The Osthoff Resort, in Elkhart Lake, Wisconsin, at the International Spa Association expo in New York. Hyperlocal ingredients, a blend of high tech and tradition, and treatments focusing not just on skin, nails and hair but also on remedying stress and pain are some of the latest trends turning up at spas. Photo: Richard Drew / AP



## News

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NEW YORK (AP) — Hyperlocal ingredients, a blend of technology and tradition, and treatments focusing not just on beauty but also on remedying stress and pain are some of the trends turning up at spas.

Members of the [International Spa Association](#) offered examples of all of them at ISPA's annual trend showcase in New York Aug. 18.

ISPA also released statistics showing the U.S. spa industry is starting to recover from the recession, with \$12.8 billion in revenue in 2010, up 4 percent over 2009, according to an annual study by PricewaterhouseCoopers. Spa visits increased from 143 million in 2009 to 150 million in 2010. But spa locations decreased by 3 percent, from 20,600 to 19,900, suggesting that the industry could not support the number of existing spas even though demand was slightly up.

"We have to continue to wow people," said [Jean Kolb](#), director of wellness at Kohler Co., which operates Kohler Waters Spas in Wisconsin and Illinois. "They're looking for something that's different and memorable."

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Some spas are taking a cue from the locavore food movement by using locally grown ingredients. Aspira the Spa in Elkhart Lake, Wis., grows colorful flowers and herbs like chamomile and lavender for use in a "chakra massage," one of a number of yoga-related treatments offered by the spa (80 minutes, \$190). The spa at the Oneida Nation's Turning Stone resort in upstate Verona, N.Y., uses "things indigenous to the area like pine, cedar, and flowers," and even maple syrup in various treatments, products and massages, said [Loretta Taylor](#), director of spa operations.

At the same time that they're going locavore and looking to traditional therapies, spas are also embracing technology. Miraval, located in Tucson, Ariz., is offering a unique treatment called Taiz Sensorium that combines aromatherapy, massage and sound. Guests listen to a soundtrack ranging from sounds of nature to composed rhythmic and instrumental music while vibrating wooden balls are applied to shoulders, neck and other pressure points (\$250 for 50 minutes). "Someone likened it to being a human tuning fork," said spokeswoman [Maura Duggan](#). "People who aren't familiar with yoga or meditation, it allows them to quickly and easily reach that meditative state."

The Spa at Trump demonstrated a pulsating light treatment on hands at the ISPA event; the LED therapy is used in facials at Trump Hotel spas (\$150 for 30 minutes at Trump Soho). The Trump team also showed off a sparkly new line of SpaRitual vegan nail polish (animal fat can be an ingredient in nail polish).

If you care to customize your massage in advance, Massage Envy has an app for that. The mall franchise, with 700 locations in 43 states, offers a free iPhone and iPad app that lets you create a massage targeting whatever hurts. You send your order in and the therapist is ready when you arrive. Massage Envy outlets give a million massages a month; a typical membership is \$59 a month, which covers one massage.

"Back in the day, a massage was something you did to treat yourself," said C.G. Funk, Massage Envy's vice president for industry relations and product development. "Now it's to manage pain and stress. People are fitting this into their wellness regimen."

Water treatments have been an essential spa experience since Roman times, but Kohler Waters Spa is updating the tradition. Its Custom Vichy Shower can be preprogrammed for different water treatment settings so that "the therapist's hands never leave the guest," said Kolb. And Kohler's [American Club Resort](#) recently debuted the luxury Eau de Vie suite (\$1,500 a night) with a deep whirlpool tub that lets you bathe in different hues of colored light at the touch of a button.

Spas are also zeroing in on specific symptoms and causes of stress. Gwinganna Lifestyle Retreat in Queensland, Australia, has a program "dedicated to sleep," said [Tony de Leede](#), Gwinganna's founder. "People come for four days to learn how to sleep."

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