

# Harper's BAZAAR



SINGAPORE  
DECEMBER 2011  
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BELLES*

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STUNNING  
BRIDES

HOW  
TO PREP  
FOR THE  
BIG  
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BEAUTY



# Botanical BIRTHRIGHTS

*The owner of Italian cosmetics house Officina de' Tornabuoni elucidates the beauty benefits of nature. By Charlotte Colquhoun*

**P**rior to his life of natural beauty at Officina de' Tornabuoni, Nicolò Magherini was an economist at the University of Florence. Some might say that this academic background has been a crucial factor in the success story of the brand, which went from niche local secret to international contender in less than 10 years.

Perhaps more important than his sound business nous, though, are Magherini's heritage and passion. "I grew

up immersed in the world of plants. My father was a professor of agriculture at the University of Florence, and my mother is a pharmacist whose own mother initiated her, at a young age, into the world of natural medicine and beauty. I was able to witness firsthand the incredible potential of nature and its endless applications in health and skincare; it was the best education one could ask for," he explains.

Taking over Officina de' Tornabuoni provided Magherini with a platform to bring his mother's carefully crafted potions to a wider audience. "She had always made her own health remedies

and skincare products. The custom preparations she created as a pharmacist were in high demand and became known as an insiders' beauty secret. I always felt that everyone should be able to benefit from these products, not just a lucky few, and that is how things started."

The products are lovingly formulated: "Nothing leaves our lab unless it is 110 per cent to our satisfaction, whatever the cost to us," explains Magherini. "Having our own laboratory means we have complete control over the entire production process, which is unusual for a company of our size. But then again, we are unusual in our industry: we are artisans who conceive



and create our products from start to finish. Our body scrubs are a wonderful example of how important proportion is in this. They seem like fairly simple products, with organic demerara sugar and pure cold-pressed oil, but you need the perfect ratio of ingredients to achieve our symphony."

If sugar and oil still sound pretty simplistic, don't be fooled. "When you work with the kind of ingredients that we do," says Magherini, "it requires a rigorous attention to the entire production process. Cold-pressed oils need to be carefully blended and care must be taken not to expose them to air or heat, which would oxidise them. They're packaged in dark glass bottles to protect the contents."

Avoiding the use of parabens, mineral oils and artificial colourants

provides another challenge (though, it must be said, not something viewed so much as a difficulty but as a natural facet of its methods of development). "Those ingredients are widely used because it is more cost-effective for manufacturers to use them. But imagine pure, wholesome and fresh food versus an artificial, heavily processed product. There is no comparison. I'm of the mind that it's best to use known, time-tested ingredients on the skin and I'm wary of using whatever the latest preservative is when no one knows what the effects will be five or 10 years down the line—that's simply not for us."

Ensuring the integrity of the ingredients doesn't stop at sourcing the best. "We cultivate sedum telephium, a natural anti-inflammatory. It is one of our favourite ingredients and used in many of our products. In the past, farm workers would peel off the rubbery outer layer of the leaf and attach the gel inner layer directly on their burns, bites, and wounds. I can't tell you how much work is involved in extracting the gel from the plant, but we consider it well worth the effort."

Creating effective, natural skincare and beauty products isn't a mission based solely on the belief that they are more effective and safer to use. "If you care about nature, then you have to care about sustaining it. We do try to do our part by minimising packaging and using recycled packaging. The notion of treading lightly on the Earth becomes even more poignant



Officina de' Tornabuoni counter

## DEFINING THE DNA

### CERTIFICATION

"While many of our ingredients are organic, our emphasis is on high quality and not on labels. If I have to choose between a poor-quality organic raw ingredient and a high-quality non-organic, then I would go for the high-quality non-organic, without a question."

### SCENT

"Smell is inextricably tied to wellbeing. We employ aromatherapy to promote deep relaxation. If you're going to take a bath, why not make a mini spa out of it? You might as well emerge feeling renewed."

### VISUAL

"The colours of our products come directly from nature's palette, which means that they vary slightly from one batch to another; but this is a luxury, a stamp of authenticity."

### BESTSELLER

"Choosing my favourite is like asking me to choose between my children. That said, I've always felt that our Crema Galatea is a great product: it's a multi-use cream with sedum telephium, olive oil and green tea extract. It's good for the face and body, to both nourish and moisturise."

as a parent; respect for the environment is the best gift that we can give to those generations yet to come."

Magherini's long-term goal may well be to instill in his offspring a reverence for the natural world, but in the short term he gave his daughter another gift: Princess Vicky. "I created the product right after Victoria was born, to protect and nourish her skin. I

couldn't find anything that I could feel good about putting on that delicate newborn skin, and so I developed a special blend of pure, cold-pressed food-quality oils." Completely free of conservants, mineral oils and fragrances, this mild product can also be used as a massage oil for sensitive and dry skin, a nourishing treatment for hair and as an effective makeup remover.

This gentle approach underlies the brand philosophy that good skincare should give results without putting stress on the skin or causing imbalances. The products are designed to be effective, without compromise, which Magherini believes plays an important role in the appeal of the spa range. "Of extreme importance is the high quality of our products and this means that when a customer tries our products for the first time, they often fall in love with them and become devoted to the range."

As horticultural knowledge was passed down through generations of Magherini's family, so too is the use of Officina de' Tornabuoni's products by its customers. While many companies would not admit to anything but a young, cool clientele, Magherini is proud of this age-egalitarian demand: "Our audience includes families with grandparents, parents and children all using the products; our customer is a sophisticated citizen of the world, looking for substance rather than simply following the trends." ■

Visit [www.officinadetornabuoni.com](http://www.officinadetornabuoni.com)

## INSIDER INFO

*Nicolò's Guide to Florence*

- Best museum:** The Uffizi ([www.uffizi.com](http://www.uffizi.com))
- Best seafood restaurant:** La Pineta di Luciano Zazzeri, Marina di Bibbona
- Best meat restaurant:** Il Canto del Maggio, Terranuova B.ni ([www.cantodelmaggio.com](http://www.cantodelmaggio.com))
- Best café:** Caffè Gilli ([www.gilli.it](http://www.gilli.it))
- Best local speciality:** The pepero at Canto del Maggio is a piatto antico that takes two days to prepare.
- Best boutique:** Loretta Caponi ([www.lorettacaponi.com](http://www.lorettacaponi.com))
- Best spa:** "The one I'm planning in my head!"
- Best city hotel:** Any of the Ferragamo Hotels ([www.lungarnocollection.com](http://www.lungarnocollection.com))
- Best country hotel:** Villa San Michele, in the hills of Fiesole ([www.villasanmichele.com](http://www.villasanmichele.com))
- Best day trip:** The Valdarno area, where our lab is located, is an area of Tuscany that has remained authentic.



Dermaplanta oral supplement; Angelique Holistic Perfume Oil; Yogi Oil; Acqua di Giama Facial Tonic; Acqua di Torno Rose and Orange Treatment Toner; Intensive Bio-active Face Cream, Officina de' Tornabuoni