



THE NEWLY RENOVATED KIEHL'S FLAGSHIP IN NEW YORK'S EAST VILLAGE

The first all-organic collection from KIEHL'S packs a punch against free radicals, with formulas featuring the current wonder berry. By JENNIFER LAING

ALL THINGS AÇAÍ

In its 158-year history of fabled creations, none of Kiehl's beloved products has boasted 100-per-cent certified-organic plant ingredients—until now. The New York-based apothecary is debuting Açai Damage-Repairing Skincare (from \$34, at Kiehl's), a collection of four face-care essentials—foaming cleanser, clarifying toning mist, repairing serum and non-greasy moisturizer—all certified natural and organic by French organization Ecocert.

While the line stars açai—a super berry currently being touted as a panacea for everything from weight problems and wrinkles to cancer—it wasn't created as a vehicle for this It ingredient. Rather, the collection was developed to fill a void. The company is renowned for finding inspiration for new products in the

requests and suggestions of its loyal customers—recent launches include Marvelous Mineral Mascara and Sunflower Color Preserving hair care. Kiehl's shoppers in their 30s began complaining of subtle changes in their skin's tone, tex-

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ture and elasticity. These customers were beyond the oil-thwarting regimens of their teens and 20s, but not quite ready for the aggressive wrinkle-fighting routines generally recommended after 40. Since dermatologists recommend antioxidants as the first line of defence against early signs of aging, the



company decided to develop a free-radical-scavenging line to answer this call. Research led to açai—the fruit of a northern Brazilian palm tree, which contains 15 times the antioxidant power of red grapes and is loaded with vitamins and essential fatty acids that neutralize free-radical damage.

Evidence of the berry's effectiveness is a bit spotty. A story published last spring by *The New York Times* revealed few legitimate studies to back up the cure-all claims. (Though, to be fair, the story concentrated mostly on açai beverages rather than topical preparations infused with the ingredient.) But Kiehl's conducted its own four-week clinical study on women aged 30 to 65, and found improvement in skin brightness and texture, and minimization of the appearance of fine lines.

Just as important as the star ingredient is the line's organic status. At about the same time that customers began asking for a line to target early signs of aging, Kiehl's began observing an uptick in demand for organic products. The company had dabbled in organic ingredients in the past—the Superbly Restorative collection boasts formulas containing organic, fairly traded Moroccan argan oil—but this is its first launch with a completely organic plant formula. This explains the brownish tint of the new line's serum and toner (it's the actual colour of the berry's juice). The essential oils in the formulas don't simply lend the products a pleasing scent; rosemary is anti-microbial while lavender has anti-inflammatory properties, and both act as natural preservatives. It's not surprising that a company that creates products based on customers' input also has its finger on the pulse of preference for organic, fair-trade beauty booty.

"We're not just a US pharmacy brand, but a downtown New York company," says Kiehl's Worldwide General Manager Patrick Kullenberg. "We've always been an apothecary that was formulating and preparing products for the neighbourhood." □