



# ENNISKERRY ESSENTIALS

*Elke Clauberg-Sheehy talks to Orla Neligan about her natural skincare products*



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We all know the saying 'You are what you eat'. How many of us actually adhere to it is another question. So it's no surprise that when it comes to our skin, the majority of us ignore the fact that, each day, we subject ourselves to an onslaught of chemicals and synthetics through the usage of creams and lotions.

Only recently I uncovered a jar of skin cream that had been tucked away at the back of a cupboard for the last six years. When opened, it smelled and looked as though I had just bought it. Some would say 'great, what a find'. But I just wondered why it

hadn't walked out of the cupboard all by itself after such a period of hibernation.

As much as 80 percent of what we put on our skin gets absorbed into our body. So what we apply on our skin should be as pure and natural as what we put in our mouths. Simple isn't it? Okay, so I know there is a level of convenience (and artful seduction) to the bombardment of creams with the lovely packaging and the even lovelier smells. They do a great job in convincing us hopeful females that they are preserving our skin, reducing our wrinkles and basically allowing us to believe we look ten years younger than we are. Well, Elke Clauberg-Sheehy

isn't convinced. After moving to Ireland 22 years ago and working for the German Irish Chamber of Commerce, giving advice to people on setting up businesses, Elke took her own advice and set up Enniskerry Essentials, a business specialising in 'honest' skin care products. The company is intent on giving the consumer an alternative to many hazardous skin care products widely available today. "There are a lot of products out there that call themselves organic but contain chemicals and additives that can be very harmful that are used to increase shelf life. I do not use chemicals, artificial additives or colourings. I would describe my



**LEFT (TOP-BOTTOM):** Soaps; A selection of creams **ABOVE:** Elke in her workshop wrapping her soap.

product as honest because everything that's in the product is on the label. It does exactly what it says on the tin!"

So what's in her products? The list is reassuring: olive oil, calendula infused oil, sunflower, castor, palm, coconut, avocado, almond, jojoba and vitamin E oils. Shea butter, cocoa butter, beeswax as hardener and preservative and grapefruit seed extract, which also acts as a preservative. Unique to all her soaps are goat's milk and whey. "When I started experimenting with different recipes, I tried goat's milk which I get locally from Old MacDonnell's Farm, who are well known for their delicious yoghurts and cheeses, and I found that the soap became even softer and gentler."

The development of her skin care range

doesn't, however, just depend on home-grown plants and local producers. Her no-nonsense approach to the manufacture of her products has fuelled a thriving business mainly based on repeat clients, with many of her products developing in direct response to the needs of friends and family. Having started out as a hobby, Elke came to the realisation that the transition from hobby to business was being influenced by demand. "Many years ago a friend from New Zealand gave me a recipe for calendula ointment. It was very simple and enjoyable to make and I thought there must be more to this. I started diversifying and making my own recipes, and different creams and lotions came about. I gave them as presents to friends to try and response was great." Elke's product range includes

Hand and Body Lotion, Light Face Cream, Gentle Face Cream, Babes of All Ages Face cream, Soothing Hand Cream, Foot Balm, Baby's Bottom Cream, Lip Balm and Eye Gels, Natural Eau de Colognes and Natural Perfume Oils. All soaps are unscented, as is a range of other products, which makes them more suitable for pregnant and nursing women. "The Potters' & Gardeners' range came about because my husband is a keen gardener and I have many friends and family members who are gardeners and potters. They were using creams that didn't work and were not necessarily good for your skin, so I developed this and they all loved it." The Potters' & Gardeners' range of hand care has been proving even more popular since the last Garden Heaven Show - and not only



**ABOVE:** A selection of creams. **RIGHT (TOP-BOTTOM):** Potters' & Gardeners' Handcream; A gift presentation

with potters and the gardening community but also with others whose hands take a daily beating, such as builders, nurses and fishermen. The Potters' & Gardeners' Soap contains the same gentle ingredients as the other soaps, but has some added very fine sand to help clean those dirty hands. The Potters' & Gardeners' Hand Cream is made from all natural oils and beeswax, and its soothing properties help repair tattered and torn hands.

Nestled in the foothills of the Wicklow Mountains, surrounded by forests, fields and streams, Elke's decision to work from home wasn't a difficult one. "Driving into Dublin every day, battling with traffic, queuing and parking, eventually took its toll. I started to ask myself 'if you are living in garden of

Ireland, what the hell are you driving into Dublin for?'" It is not just the beautiful surroundings that help make her work so enjoyable. "People always tell me how much they look forward to retiring but it never crosses my mind because I don't think of this as work. It is a totally rewarding process. I get pleasure from seeing people enjoying my products."

With a philosophy that includes honesty, ethics, value for money and sustainability, Enniskerry Essentials has carved a small but very loyal market share where the products speak for themselves. "I hate the word organic and I hate the word natural. I believe in making honest and ethical products with a minimum impact on the environment. I think everybody deserves honest products at

an affordable level. I am constantly listening to what people want and that is the most organic thing about me." ■

#### ENNISKERRY ESSENTIALS

Available from Ecoshop, Glen of the Downs, Co. Wicklow, and Cultivate Sustainable Living Centre, Temple Bar, Dublin. The Potters' & Gardeners' Hand cream and Soap are also available in Healy's Pottery, Rocky Valley, Kilmacanogue.

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