



Austin woman

July 2006

Vol. IV, No. 9

The Blanton Museum of Art's

essie Otto Hite



**Texas
Writers Mo**

HEALTH

Women + Infert

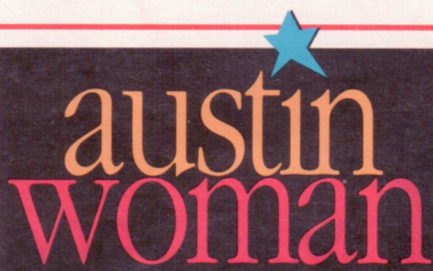
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austin woman

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Story by Autumn Rhea Carpenter. Photos by Scott Ramsay.

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Story by Cynthia English

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The Women of Wine

Fresh, Female Faces of the Wine Industry

From Hollywood offspring to a rollicking-and-racy expert entertainer to a former chemical ecologist-turned-winemaker; Katie MacMurray, Leslie Sbrocco and Ginny Lambrix put a refreshingly feminine spin on the world of wine. We show you what you might have missed last month at the 21st Annual Texas Hill Country Wine + Food Festival's **austinwoman**-sponsored women in wine events.

Story by Karen Odom Spezia

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From the 21st Annual Texas Hill Country Wine + Food Festival

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Story by Marika Flatt and Kelly Lumpkins

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A Survivor of the Balkans Reflects

Former Kosovan looks back on her past and present in her new Austin home. Part 1 of 2 reflecting on the horrors and lessons from the War in the Balkans in light of the recent death of former Serbian president Slobodan Milosevic.

Story by Dita Dauti-Heilman. Photo by Bobby Wright.

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Intellectual, social and political changes have caused many women to delay families, but modern technologies are reviving their dreams of biological children. **austinwoman** explores women + infertility over the next few months.

Photo by Denise Prince Martin

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Part One of a Five-Part Series

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Story by Autumn Rhea Carpenter. Photos by Stacy Strou

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Story by Tonyia Sullivan. Photos by Gordon McGregor.

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Story and photos by Deborah Hamilton-Lynne

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Compiled by Merrie Donehoo.

SPA

milk + honey

An Urban Day Spa Promised Land

Alissa Bayer Shares Her Simple Beauty Formula

Story by Autumn Rhea Carpenter

Photos by Scott Ramsay

AS I SAT SWADDLED IN ESSENTIAL oil goodness, wrapped comfortably in a cozy spa robe, and swilling cucumber-flavored water at milk + honey, I caught a glimpse of the bustling 2nd Street District downtown. Feeling a calm wash over me, I realized that the urban day spa had nailed its objective to be a natural, hip, relaxed atmo-

Austin transplant and owner of milk + honey, Alissa Bayer, opened the spa in January after moving to the capital city in 2002. Her goal was to open an establishment that made people happy, while utilizing her business smarts.

Bayer discovered Austin when she was accepted into The University of Texas MBA program and arrived in Texas a

Bayer. "But I fell in love with Austin's culture and people and my husband and I quickly decided to call it home."

While attending graduate school, Bayer felt like the "odd man out" in many of her classes, knowing that she never wanted to work for a huge corporation. "I was ready for a change and knew that I wanted to make a difference," she said.

pooling resources, creating a business model, and managing cash flow."

According to Bayer, most spa owners are not equipped with the business acumen that has allowed her to launch her first spa so quickly. "I hired a spa manager, Christine Chism, who has extensive spa management experience. Her background complements mine and the rela-

Bayer added a fun touch to her spa's slogan, calling her staff "spa partisans." Seeking a touch of irreverence... "A spa partisan is a supporter of all things spa and always votes for the spa party. I like the fact that we don't take ourselves too seriously."

sphere, set among the 225,000 square feet of unique retail, restaurant and entertainment establishments that now caters to downtown pedestrians.

day before classes began. "I admit that I was a little nervous about coming to Texas, after living in New York, Washington, D.C., and San Francisco," said

"The spa concept felt right because it would be making people feel good, while using my geeky business school experience, developing branding and logos,

tionship has proved successful."

When brainstorming about the spa's name, Bayer decided on milk + honey. "I went with my gut, knowing that the spa I



Spa patrons may relax in the midst of urban renewal in the 2nd Street District.

wanted didn't exist in Austin," said Bayer. "I wanted a place that was decadent and luxurious, while feeling wholesome and basic. milk + honey was perfect."

Bayer added a fun touch to her spa's slogan, calling her staff "spa partisans." Seeking a touch of irreverence, Bayer explained its meaning. "I wanted to call myself a 'spa floozy' but that really wasn't appropriate and I knew people wouldn't get the joke," said Bayer. "A spa partisan is a supporter of all things

spa and always votes for the spa party. I like the fact that we don't take ourselves too seriously."

Bayer chose the 2nd Street District for its urban qualities. "It gives people a reason to park their cars and enjoy the downtown experience," said Bayer. "Unlike other areas of Austin, where you have to cross four lanes of traffic before reaching the other side of the street, this development has maintained the mind-

See AN URBAN DAY SPA on page 12

set that people want to spend some time milling among the great stores and still enjoy the outdoors.”

Natural healing is an important feature at this spa and an important topic for Bayer. “We live in such a toxic environment and that means people have to take time to detoxify and recharge,” she said. “Consumers are becoming more aware that not only our food affects our health, but so do the products that we use on and around our bodies. Clients are requiring more attention to health, balance and sanctuary.”

In the same vein as the natural philosophy, many of the products sold at milk + honey are natural or organic. “Many of our offerings are vegan and give our clients more options in their beauty regime,” said Bayer. “There are some issues that can’t be solved organically, but we make an effort to sell products for the most part that do address those issues.”

milk + honey also sells gift certificates, clothing, jewelry and gifts, and artwork. “Since this is a shopping district, we wanted to offer unique items to our customers,” said Bayer. “We also sell my friend Beth Weintraub’s modular art and it flows nicely with the spa’s design. The handmade intaglio etchings on metal plates make incredible collectible pieces.”

When hiring staff, Bayer sought employees with the core desire to provide relaxation and healing. “Many people who are massage therapists left more lucrative careers to pursue the field,” said Bayer. “We hired people who are simply happy and who love what they do. Having a nurturing, caring personality is important too.”

Bayer unintentionally chose women to help her launch milk + honey. “I hired a female architect, banker and contractor when we were creating my spa,” said Bayer. “Since this is my first experience as a spa owner, I can’t say that working with women was better than with men, but I can say that they were all so talented in their respective specialties and that definitely made it a positive experience for me.”

milk + honey offers a variety of body, skin and nail treatments and packages, tailored for different purposes. A popular package is the couple’s retreat, which includes a 60-minute urban retreat massage, a mini-facial and a mini-manicure with a paraffin dip. “Our couple’s room

is always booked and I wish we had built another one just like it," said Bayer.

Men are also frequent visitors to milk + honey. "The 'man factor' is in full-force here," said Bayer. "We provide almost as many men as women with facials, pedicures and massages. There are treatments designed specifically for them, including sports massages, a back buff, or a deep clean facial."

The urban spa also offers an environment for group events, such as wedding parties, baby showers and work retreats. "I'm excited about creating a girls' night out pajama party," said Bayer. "We would provide a choice of luxurious pajamas and treatments and close the spa to the public for a few hours. Groups could spend time together and have the spa all to themselves." ★

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 512.236.1115

milk + honey menu		massage treatments	
skin treatments		Urban Retreat (60 minutes)	\$85
Mini Facial (45 minutes)	\$65	Deep Tissue (60 minutes)	\$95
m + h Facial (60 minutes)	\$65	Hot Stone (90 minutes)	\$135
Deep Facial (75 minutes)	\$105	Heads, Hands, Feet (60 minutes)	\$85
SkinBella (30 minutes)	\$95	Pregnancy (90 minutes)	\$135
Back Facial (45 minutes)	\$75	Reflexology (45 minutes)	\$75
		Reiki (60 minutes)	\$95



Gifts, art and beauty products can be purchased at the urban day spa.

*A New Year
 A Beautiful New You*

- Contour Threadlift
- Photofacial
- Microdermabrasion
- Restylane®
- BOTOX Cosmetic®
- NoNeedle Mesotherapy
- Hair Removal
- Facials
- Air Brush Tanning
- Chocolate Tan
- Eyelash Extensions
- Zeno® Acne Device
- Waxing
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- Kinerase®
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