

Just say spa-aaah!

Calgary Herald

Published: Thursday, April 03, 2008

Yvonne Jeffery
Calgary Herald

"Would you like to partake in a mimosa and some chocolates?"



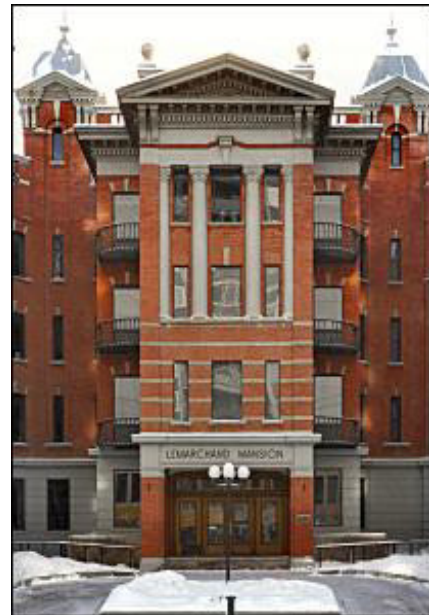
Brad Pitt signed his photo, which sits on a windowsill, when he visited Peaches & Cream.

OK, let's set the scene: It's late Friday afternoon and I've had two intense days in conference after cramming a week of work into three days, not to mention driving to Edmonton. My sister, Lorraine, is just as stressed out, not only handling a full-time managerial-level job but two active young sons. Would we like mimosas and chocolates? You don't have to ask us twice.

Already, I'm congratulating myself on an inspired idea. I head north from Calgary on the Queen Elizabeth II Highway as often as possible to visit family in the capital, but I've recently realized that I tend to see my sister for just a few hours at a time and almost never when it's just us. Rarely do we indulge in any "together" time.

So on this trip, we're indulging big - an afternoon at Edmonton's Peaches & Cream Spa, in the historic LeMarchand Mansion perched on the edge of the North Saskatchewan River valley. Before fluffy white flakes of snow interrupt a pretty view of trees and cliffs, it reminds me that as much as I love Calgary, Edmonton has a great deal going for it, too. Clearly, I don't explore the city nearly enough when I'm here. Exploring Peaches & Cream seems an excellent start.

Beverly Evans, who co-owns the spa with husband Ian Cowie, leads us back towards a light, airy open-concept area, where we'll have our facials. By the time that I don a comfy robe in the single-person change room, Lorraine is leaning back in a comfy chair, watching the fire and enjoying the chocolate. Beverly notices our smiles.



Peaches & Cream Spa is in the LeMarchand Mansion.

"That's why we don't start you off right away," she says. "You sit down, breathe, decompress. We don't like to rush."



The relaxation room of Peaches & Cream Spa in Edmonton

She's not kidding. Peaches & Cream is relatively small as many spas go (the bathroom's down the re-purposed mansion's main hall), but that equates to an intimate and personalized service. I'd said on booking that this was a girls' getaway, and in fact we're the only girls in here. Instead of being led off to separate treatment rooms, we're together, meaning that we can giggle and chat to our heart's content as our pores and (in my case) fine lines are assessed.

As we start, we see firsthand the spa's focus not just on esthetics but on educating us about our skin. Beverley recommends a Specialized Facial for Lorraine, designed for her skin type and the Pure Kronoxyl-3 "Anti-Botox" Facial

for me, using topical products from Laboratoire Dr. Renaud as a cosmetic alternative to anti-aging surgery. Beverley would never dream of revealing whether this is the treatment Brad Pitt and the folks on the Jesse James movie had when they were filming in Edmonton, but I'm willing to go with the signed picture on the windowsill and take that leap of faith.

"I want to give people options for whatever works before Botox, before surgery," Beverley says. "A lot of people don't know that they can walk before they run. And you won't believe the results."

She takes me through five steps, beginning with a deep cleansing lotion and steam and then a hydrating massage. So far, so normal, until we depart from the usual with a lotion that goes on with a cool, white heat: hot, but not. Then, Beverley applies stick-on patches over my wrinkles, topped with a liquid that cures to the kind of rubbery mask that movie bad guys rip off at the last minute to reveal who they really are. The last step is a serum that helps restructure the skin.

Of course, the proof is in the reveal. Beverley hands me a mirror, and I'm taken aback. "I look 10 years younger," is my reaction.



The beautiful Edmonton River Valley.

She looks at me carefully. "Maybe five,"

she says.

Seriously, though, the difference is visible, with fine lines not nearly as noticeable, and the sun-squint furrow between my brows eased. Lorraine is similarly impressed with her facial, so off we go to the couples room for the hot stone massage. This one is all about relaxation: The pressure isn't intense, but the warmth of the smooth stones definitely helps to soothe tense muscles. There's no giggling now, as we're each lulled into separate thought spaces.

So, the results: Three hours of uninterrupted sister time. A little pampering and personal attention. A great facial that did what it promised (and would, I suspect, last even longer if you followed the recommended at-home products, which I haven't so far - Lorraine did, however, and says her skin still looks great).

I check in with Lorraine the next day to get her assessment. "I wasn't sure about the massage," she says. "But I had the best sleep last night that I've had in ages."

That's more than good enough for me.

For more information:

. Peaches & Cream Spa (11523 100 Ave. in Edmonton; peachesandcreamspas.com; (780) 482-2664). The facials and hot stone massages were \$140 each plus tax. The spa is known for its group packages, including "princess" spa birthday parties for the younger set and pre-wedding packages for both guys and gals.