

Elina Fedotova | Aesthetician, Formulator and Entrepreneur



Before coming to the U.S. from Russia in 1991, Elina Fedotova transformed her acne prone skin into a glowing example of the power of natural healing. She is now the CEO of Elina Organics with clinics in Chicago, Ill. and Kalamazoo, Mich. Her products are available in spas and medical offices across the U.S. and abroad. Elina is the founder of the Association of Holistic Skin Care Practitioners and makes regular TV appearances with Elina Skin Cuisine segments. "Good face cream should be like a fresh meal for your skin!" says Fedotova, "More and more research shows it might end up into your bloodstream, and I believe in skin care products formulated from food grade ingredients."

Throughout my 18 years in the aesthetic industry I have worked as an aesthetician in a holistic wellness

Elina Fedotova's one piece of advice she gives to every client she sees –

center, a spa and a plastic surgeon's office. It is difficult to say whether it is working with clients, formulating my products, or being a business owner that has taught me the most or had the most impact. However, working hands on with clients has helped me better connect with and understand not only their skin, but also their lives. **A holistic approach to skin care has been a constant theme throughout my career.** I do not use products or procedures that might lead to undesirable side effects.

Although my approach was not a popular trend when I came to the U.S. in 1991, I have remained true to myself by only working with natural ingredients and offering services that work in harmony with the entire body. **In this industry, products and services must be continuously updated to stay current with the latest research.** Therefore, I adjust all of my formulations according to the seasons. This is necessary for my clients to get the very best results and it prevents their skin from becoming immune to ingredients. **Expertise and corrective results offered with positivity, compassion and professionalism is what I believe sets the best clinics apart from the rest.** People are looking for professional expertise that delivers corrective results. While they might initially be attracted to a beautiful facility, they will not return unless the professionals there are able to make them not only feel, but look better after each treatment. People are attracted to spas with professionals who have the ability to listen and not dump their personal problems on clients; **when a client is on the treatment table, it is their time to be heard!** Beauty is more than skin deep; a person is much more than a physical body. As a holistic practitioner I believe that we grow through our choices and experiences with the ultimate goal to achieve unconditional love and balance. We agree that beautiful skin can appear only on a healthy

"No matter how perfect your skin is – if you are unhappy, or are feeling fear, anger, disappointment, jealousy or some other negative emotion – it makes you unattractive. If you are able to keep yourself internally peaceful and smiling to the world, you can improve your skin with products and procedures. But it really helps to have an optimistic and positive approach to life first!"



body; but a healthy body requires mental clarity, positive emotions, whole food and a clean environment. **It is hard to achieve this alone. We need each other to make better choices individually and on a global scale.**

DERMASCOPE:

What various roles and positions have you held within the industry? *continued ...*

Elina:

... In 1998 I opened my first clinic and finally launched my Elina Organics skin care line. I still hand-make my products from organic botanicals and other natural ingredients from start to finish, and never use any pre-manufactured bases. After a batch of products is made, it is bottled and labeled by several lab assistants who work with me. We ship them all over the country and abroad to skin care salons and medical offices. They are distributed to licensed professionals only and are not sold over-the-counter.

In 2006, I released my best selling product ... Ambra-Lift. A key ingredient is Baltic Amber, and independent genomic studies show that Ambra-Lift has anti-aging, anti-wrinkle, anti-inflammatory and antioxidant effects after two applications over a period of 48 hours. The study also shows it increases the expression of Sirtuin-1, a key anti-aging gene. After this study was done, I noticed raw ingredient suppliers started offering Baltic Amber for skin care formulators.

In 2006 I also opened a second clinic on Oak Street in the heart of Chicago. It has not gone unnoticed. The "Living Healthy Chicago" show and WGN TV shot several Elina Skin Cuisine segments about holistic skin care techniques and formulations. A summer organic beauty product segment with Ginger Zee aired on NBC 5 in Chicago.

DERMASCOPE:

Which of these has taught you the most or had the most impact on you and how? *continued ...*

Elina:

... I don't have time to watch much television, so I think of it as my own personal "Days of Our Lives" show because I have seen many clients monthly for over 15 years. They trust me with their skin, life stories, news about their children growing up and their grandchildren being born. It allows me to be a witness and a part of it all, which is an incredible experience. I am very grateful for this opportunity.

That is why I still work two days a week with clients in addition my work in the lab. It is so gratifying to hear many of my clients say how much better their faces look after a decade of Elina holistic skin care treatments!

Formulating products is a more solitary, meditative experience, which is a very important part of my life. I "cook" them myself in small batches every week. It's exciting to be able to deliver corrective, edible formulations to hundreds of people who use them every day.

Being a business owner has been the most difficult experience. In fact, I would not want to be one if I did not have my own line of products, because administrative duties are my least favorite things to do. However, I have learned a lot about how to find and connect with the right team of people who can work together with love and compassion instead of being competitive. It has been the most difficult thing in my career to maintain a work environment that is balanced and to find holistically-minded people who work together as true friends. I think any business owner would agree that working out the human part is the biggest challenge.

DERMASCOPE:

Has there been a constant theme that has led you from one point to the next throughout your training and career? *continued ...*

Elina:

... That is why in 2007, I organized the Association of Holistic Skin Care Practitioners, which allowed me to be able to share this approach with other aestheticians. Many holistically-minded people can feel isolated and I felt they needed a network to connect with liked minded aestheticians.

I am not afraid of competition, because truly holistic practitioners do not believe in it. There is enough business for everyone if you are truly able to bring the best, healthiest and most effective products and procedures to your clients.

DERMASCOPE:

What has surprised you most during your professional journey?

Elina:

People! Just when you think you know them, they turn around and do something you think is out of character. Sometimes they are loving and generous ... sometimes the opposite. This leads to endless discoveries about human nature. I have seen many examples of generosity that just make my day.

DERMASCOPE:

Do you have any regrets, or is there any one thing you can point to and think, "I wish I would have done that differently" or "if only I had known then what I know now?" Please explain.

Elina:

No, I do not believe in regrets. I received my education through painful experiences and that is how I grew. I do not believe in looking back. The only way to move is forward. Otherwise you get stuck!

DERMASCOPE:

Why do you think people come to a particular spa/skin care clinic? *continued ...*

Elina:

People are attracted to spas with professionals who have the ability listen and not dump their personal problems on clients. I will fire a person if I find out they are doing this. I understand we are all connected and friendly.... It is okay to share personal achievements that are positive, like losing weight or having more energy. However, there should be no negativity, because people have plenty of that going on in their own lives. It is crucial that any sharing on the part of the aesthetician is good and inspirational.

DERMASCOPE:

What do you believe separates the best clinics from the rest? *continued ...*

Elina:

The best clinics are places where clients go to get reliable consistent service. In addition, the owner is able to maintain a stable staff of skin care practitioners – because they create an atmosphere where the staff is happy and *wants* to stay.

DERMASCOPE:

Do you have a signature treatment that your clients love – a classic of sorts? If so, what makes it so loved?

Elina:

I have several of them, but they all start with deep cleansing, vacuuming and extractions. My clients with dry, sun-damaged complexions love my Crushed Amber Facial. Their skin looks brighter and just glows after that treatment. Clients are also excited about my latest protocol, the Gemstone Facial. They can see and feel the results on an energetic level that go more than skin deep. But, the classic favorite is the Elina Corrective Herbal Facial. Clients never receive exactly the same treatment because every single mask is freshly mixed to target their skin needs at that moment.

DERMASCOPE:

What tool or tools would your treatment room not be complete without and why?

Elina:

A vaporizer, magnifying lamp and vacuum unit; these are the essential basics for any professional skin care office.

DERMASCOPE:

What adaptations have you made over the years to stay relevant in the treatment room? *continued ...*

Elina:

Elina Facial Protocols can be tailored to meet the unique skin care needs of every client. I train aestheticians how to adjust products to individual complexions. I also use a lot of modern equipment like LED and cold lasers. We also offer body contouring air pressure treatments along with traditional manual cellulite reduction procedures and customized herbal body wraps.

DERMASCOPE:

Is there a particular moment or procedure where most aestheticians go wrong? What could they alter for a better result?

Elina:

Yes, extractions. I believe that being able to perform effective extractions is an art form. Even after successfully cleaning the pores by vacuuming the skin, some impurities remain so we have to do manual extractions. The key is to perform them efficiently and effectively; to remove unwanted comedones or milia without breaking capillaries and hurting the client's skin.

DERMASCOPE:

Realizing you are also a manufacturer and educator: how does one cut through all the marketing to find the product lines(s) that are right for them?

Elina:

Find the right line(s) by analyzing the ingredients to make sure they are natural and have corrective properties. They also need to include more than just honey, oil and wax and be formulated in a sophisticated way. For the best results it is important to use products that penetrate the epidermis and deliver natural nutrients to the living skin cells.

DERMASCOPE:

As a manufacturer, is there a particular ingredient that you feel is a "super" ingredient? If so, why?

Elina:

Yes, Sea Buckthorn Oil. Sea Buckthorn is a "must have" and a key ingredient in practically all my formulations because it offers a very valuable cocktail of vitamins and nutrients for the skin.

DERMASCOPE:

You wear so many hats; manufacturer, distributor, educator, skin care company owner, et cetera. What is your secret to keeping life in balance and enjoying the journey?

Elina:

To be honest, I work all the time. Even those few hours that I sleep I still have dreams about my business! That is why I still feel guilty for my family and every year I have a New Year's resolution to give more of my time to my husband and son, who is already 21-years-old. He is a college student who has turned out to be a very thoughtful and generous person.

I am able to work so much because I wear many hats and what I do constantly changes. I could not just work with clients or formulate products 24-hours a day. After two 12-hour days with clients, I feel exhausted. But

instead of taking a day off I go to the lab where I am alone making products and having an incredible meditative and inspirational experience around my herbs and minerals. But it would be too lonely if I did that every day of the week!

After I make a batch of products, my son and other lab assistants bottle and label them. Now I spend time with my son while I work! Then when I am doing educational presentations and conferences, I get this incredible experience of connecting with hundreds of aestheticians and holistic professionals. It is an amazing, joyful experience.

All of this work is intense, but because it varies all the time it is always interesting. When I write articles for skin care magazines, I get to speak to a wider number of professionals. I also love to do Elina Skin Cuisine TV segments where I can talk to viewers in everyday language. Yes my life is very busy, but it allows me to express myself in so many ways. I am grateful for this opportunity!

DERMASCOPE:

It is obvious that holistic practices play a significant roll in your personal and professional life. Please elaborate on why.

Elina:

We know that beauty is more than skin deep and that a person is much more than a physical body. As a holistic practitioner I believe that we grow through our choices and experiences with the ultimate goal to achieve unconditional love and balance. We agree that beautiful skin can appear only on a healthy body. But a healthy body requires mental clarity, positive emotions, whole food and a clean environment. It is hard to achieve this alone. We need each other to make better choices individually and on a global scale. By taking a "whole-istic" approach to our health and lives, I feel we can deliver more peace to ourselves, care more about our resources, and help create a more harmonious life for all; practicing holistic skin care is a large part of making this happen.

DERMASCOPE:

Can you please elaborate on the inspiration behind the Association of Holistic Skin Care Practitioners, what it is, what it does, and the significance it has for yourself, your company and our industry?

Elina:

What inspired me to start the Association of Holistic Skin Care Practitioners (AHSCP) was my desire to offer other professionals who believe in a holistic approach to skin care the chance to network with and learn from each other. I know I am not alone in my belief in a holistic approach to beauty and I felt a strong desire to create an educational forum for aestheticians who are really serious about wanting to learn more about how care for the their clients skin in this holistic way.

We started the association in 2007 and for a few years offered a single conference. Now we are now expanding from one to three annual conferences in Michigan, California and the Washington D.C. area, and are offering additional workshops around the country.

AHSCP offers training and information about the newest research on natural ingredients and non-invasive methods for corrective skin care treatments. We also study, validate and share how a healthy approach to beauty is more effective in the long term.

While the AHSCP offers members a variety of workshops, because we take a holistic perspective, not all of them

are focused directly on the skin. Rather they are designed to take a broader body/mind approach to skin care and help bring in more clients.

I feel the work I do for the AHSCP is significant because I believe if we all took a more holistic approach to life we would have a safer, kinder, more loving planet.

One of my friends told me if every single person would take care of only one person – themselves – and were loving and peaceful, then we would have a much better world!

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