

Treasures of Africa Part 2



Key attributes of this great oil cosmetically, in combination with such superior nutritional value are: fast absorption, assisting with hydration and reduction of TEWL, helps to reduce redness and vascular pigmentation, and the healing of tissue. These attributes offer facial skin, smoothness, plumpness and elasticity making it an innovative choice for modern cosmetic formulas.

The composition of marula is very similar to that of olive oil, so no wonder there are such valuable attributes shared between the two. Marula however is truly precious and quite expensive in comparison to the best Virgin Olive Oil, and is more useful for treating cracked skin on thicker epidermal layers such as the feet, while nourishing and soothing stressed tissue such as the lips or other fragile mucus membrane.

Now for something different. A compound for cleansing that is so unique, so pure and so good for your skin. Well it's called a soap, but not actually a soap at all:

African Black Soap (Anago) – is an organic and pure compound of oils, butters and plants used to wash even the most sensitive and fragile skins. This amazing cleansing compound can even remove make up, sooth and care for damaged skin even up to the most severe or chronic pathologies such as acne, eczema and burns.

The generic formula consists of organic shea butter, virgin palm kernel, virgin coconut, cocoa butter, cocoa pods and agow and plantain skins and bark. The wondrous compound is free of animal fats and of course totally free of any synthetic additives or fragrance. Each village will have a slightly different recipe and some with more shea butter, some with more or less virgin palm kernel, but basically the exact recipe and process is kept a secret by the women of each village.

The real thing is extremely difficult to source and is done so via Fair Trade organizations exclusively. Therefore there are many, many imitations on the market globally.

In its raw, unprocessed form it is a chocolate coloured, dense fudge like consistency with clear pockets of different plant matter and butters compressed to form a solid compound. The real black soap is neither hard enough to be a hand held bar nor soft enough to

Treasures of Africa Part 1 Ethno botanical Actives for Skincare:



dispense through a pump or plastic tube.

In skin feel, lather and pH effect, Anago (often called Alata or Ose Dudu in different regions) is very different from soap as we know it. Kinder, more emollient but non-comedogenic as a cleanser for people that want the purest of products possible.

Finally one of my all time favourite Vegetals that is indigenous to African and Asian soils:

Black Seed Sesame (inci: Sesamum indicum)

This particular sesame has traditionally been used not only in African village culture, but is part of Indian Ayurvedic practice. It is a rich emollient very high in EFAs and significant in minerals such as zinc, phosphorus and magnesium as well as vitamin E. This oil really does a good job of helping to maintain integrity of skin tissue with restructuring and moisturising properties. Sesame also has been found to have slight natural sun protective qualities, though not as high as that provided by the natural cinnamate of shea butter.

The one word of caution with this oil; it is quite heavy and significantly dense molecularly thus suggesting that it should not be applied to facial skin on it's own, but would be much more effective as a facial nutritive oil if blended with much lighter vegetals and essential oils.

Black Seed Sesame is also known as gingili oil and from the earliest antiquity of Ancient Egypt to the Indian continent has been revered as a valuable nutrient and soothing skin elixir.

So, from the rich African soil we have the opportunity to experience some of the greatest natural aromatic plants, emollient oils and extracts for the benefit of skin and hair on the market today. Some are already in common use or already making their way into products within the UK/EU market. However, some such as marula and baobab, have yet to really take their rightful place as value options for formulators and customers here in Australia.

Author: Lisa Phipps, creator of REMEDiCa and Richesse de L'Afrique.

Editor's note: If you are interested in products containing the rich, nourishing oils and botanicals discussed in this article, Lisa has included many of them in the Richesse de L'Afrique range. One of the most popular and unique ingredients being the West African Anago Cleansing Paste utilised in the Anago Salt Scrub. Ideal for normal, combination and oily or blemished skin as Anago cleanses without stripping the natural oils from the skin and encourages rapid acid mantle recovery which means it doesn't dry skin out or give it that stretched feel.

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Richesse Vanilla & Shea Nut Body Butter
Richesse Anago gentle salt scrub—for face & body
Richesse Pure Anago cleansing paste
Richesse Pure Shea Butter & Aloe Vera Emollient
Richesse Body Milk Veloute
Richesse Pure Baobab Oil—to be release October 2007



By Lisa Phipps, REMEDiCa Australia

Once this dense butter has melted at body temperature, it has a high skin penetrative ability and is often used to sooth or help treat severe skin pathologies such as eczema on young children.

Some people will say that Shea Butter is perhaps the only ingredient you will ever need on your skin. Though probably too rich for most facial skin and too slow to melt for the hands, it does have a physical restructuring effect on the epidermis and latex (elasticising) characteristics which work wonders on stretch marks.

In all, this miracle butter in it's organic and unrefined state is considered anti aging, UV protective (natural cinnamate) and climate protective. The more processing this butter goes through in terms of some skin care products, may mean the loss of some nutritional elements of the butter, however it will still provide the skin with a great moisture barrier or climate defence and may still contain the natural elasticising properties that help so much with physically stressed skin.

Now, these two really are hidden treasures...

Baobab Oil (inci: Adansonia digitata)

One of Africa's best-kept secrets! With high amounts of Alpha and Beta-carotene, amino acids and other nutrients, this oil is a stand out skin and metabolic nutritive. Every inch of this tree offers "life support" so to speak, including the seeds, bark, and fruit. However it is the oil from the seeds that is most valued for the skin as it is rich in proteins, thiamine, very high in EFAs and vitamins A, D, E and F.

Coming from one of the oldest trees recorded, with some spanning up to 3,000 years, this rich golden emollient oil has been part of African skincare for centuries.

Baobab provides some impressive moisturising benefits to the skin and hair. As an example of a fast absorbing oil, baobab is suitable not only for the improvement of elasticity to the skin in general but is also suitable for facial skin care, as it encourages the regeneration of skin cells and is non-comedogenic.

Baobab exhibits hair shine and protection abilities, vital dermal protection and elasticity as well as supporting cell regeneration.

Marula Oil (inci: Sclerocarya birrea)

Native of North Central Namibia, and many parts of South Africa, Botswana and Zimbabwe, marula oil is indeed Africa's miracle oil. Coming from the same family as mangoes, poison ivy and cashew nuts, the plum sized fruit from this wondrous plant is often responsible for getting elephants drunk when they feast on it.

Marula is one of Africa's greatest skincare oils with remarkable qualities such as a very high level of natural antioxidants, oleic acid, and essential components for the maintenance of healthy skin.

African oils or Vegetals are no longer just popularly linked to ceremonies and tribal folklore.

Right across Africa there are thousands of plants used for their value in both perfumery and skincare, stemming back - tribally as ritual and ceremonial- to at least 2000 BC as commercial commodities by the Priests in Egypt. More and more is becoming known about the great flora culture stemming from the African/Egyptian soils, such as iris, jasmine, lotus, narcissus and rose, but what about the incredible natural skincare treasures these lands share?

While we may still in some instances think that the rich array of aromatics and vegetals originating from Africa are more useful as "snake bite remedies", more high-end cosmetic formulations are including the great vitamin, mineral and skin nourishing benefits of Africa's rich natural treasures in skincare.

Some of the most popular, useful and respected botanicals indigenous to Africa for skin care are:

Buchu, Sweet Almond (high in Essential Fatty Acids or EFAs and Vitamins A, B1, B2, B6, E), Shea Butter/Shea Oil, Black Soap (Anago) – a compound of various organically grown plants, butters and oils, Baobab Oil (Sthn & East Africa), Marula Oil (South African), Somalian Frankincense, North African Myrrh, African Rose Oil, African Cocoa Butter,

Avocado (high in A, B1, B2, B5, D, E, minerals, proteins and Lecithin), and one of my absolute favourites, Black Seed Sesame.

I have chosen a few of the most outstanding oils Africa has to offer as an introduction to her treasure trove.

One of the most popular and well known of course is from the Karite tree of the Savannah....

Shea Butter (inci: Butyrospermum Parkii)

Hand—Pressed, Certified Organic, Unrefined—No other single butter is as useful for the skin. A superior therapeutic emollient for aged, cracked, and damaged skin, it also acts as barrier against moisture loss otherwise known as Trans Epidermal Water Loss or (TEWL).

The solid fat expressed from the Shea Kernels of the Karite tree contains very high levels of vitamins A, E, Iron and a natural form of the sun-protective cinnamate.