

OUT OF TOWN

When shopping around for superior beauty treatments, don't discount your local salon. It might even be good for your soul BY LOUISE CHUNN

Think global, act local. When it comes to stocking your kitchen, this means using your neighbourhood greengrocer or butcher so you know the provenance of what you eat. We're encouraged to keep our high streets alive by remembering the independent bookshops and boutiques, art galleries and ironmongers rather than mindlessly clicking on the internet or rushing into the nearest impersonal superstore.

The same is true of beauty. Working in the West End of London, I could slip in to any number of big stores for a beauty treatment, but I like to stay close

to home. Food & Face in my part of north-west London is not a particularly swanky establishment, but owner Sally Turberville Smith is an experienced, personable character. I positively enjoy spending an hour or two with her or one of her staff having a pedicure, facial or hot stone massage on a Saturday.

Part of the reason for my loyalty is that I get something more than a beauty treatment. From the moment I walk through the door I feel a bit better than before. What I am after, I suspect, is as old as we female humans are: a version of what played out in the harem in Constantinople or with the women of the bedchamber at the court of Louis XIV. Women gathered together, while their assistants swirled about primping, plucking and prettifying. By the beginnings of the twentieth century, beauty salons opened up to meet the demand, even if 'respectable' women often entered them by the back door.

Sally and I are contemporaries, and we talk. Sometimes it will be beauty oriented (what do we think of Botox, has she ever had a skin peel, what can I do about hyperkeratosis?). Other times it's local chat or even sports gossip (we are both keen tennis players). And at the end of it, utterly relaxed and refreshed, I can wander home, on foot.

Christine Buccella has had similar experiences in the village of Stansted Mountfitchet in Essex. 'I used to go to a big London salon but it never felt like a treat,' she says. 'But here I've found a brilliant hairdresser and beautician – they know everything about me, and they even offer up their daughters as childcare when I'm in a fix. It really is personal service, and the treatments are as good as in a big city.'

Part bastion of female solidarity, part convenience, the local salon is no longer the symbol of sleepy suburbia, but a chance to support a local economy. And it is usually far cheaper, too.



HOW TO GO LOCAL

- Word of mouth is always the best recommendation. Ask local women whose hair or nails you like the look of where they go.
- Sign up to newsletters. Many local salons offer discounted rates on certain days, or reward loyalty with exclusive offers.
- If you're visiting a salon for the first time, test the water with a manicure before committing to a (more expensive) haircut or facial.

Psychologies readers can receive a 20 per cent discount when they book their first appointment at Food & Face, London NW6 (foodandface.com)