

Chemistry in Cosmetics

It is often the search for excellence which leads us on to bigger and better things. Just ask John and Lotte Davis, who founded Advance Group Hair Products Ltd. (AG) in Burnaby, B.C. in 1989.

John had previously been with a hair product company from Britain. One day, while perusing the company plant, he noticed a young man dumping a large quantity of a white, granular substance into a tank full of hair product. The substance was salt, used to preserve and thicken products, but which can also be damaging to hair. John realized that he did not even know what was going into his own products.

At AG, salt is not used and products are highly concentrated so as to offer more value than the competition. They have a research and development chemist, Zdravka Stoyeff, who is always working on new products. But the most important component of their R & D system is feedback from the salons and customers themselves.

A new product goes through rigorous stability testing, including freezing and thawing, and is used on mannequin heads before it is tested in a small network of salons. It takes about a year to develop a new product.

AG is now a multi-million dollar enterprise with 30 products and over 100 employees. Products are available as far east as Ontario and shipments have recently begun to the USA. A vision of high-quality products with no unnecessary ingredients is now a Canadian success story.

Chemist, Nam Fong Han went into the cosmetics business for similar reasons. He noticed a rising demand from consumers for natural, plant-based products with no synthetic chemicals. His Ottawa-based company Natunola manufactures canola-based ingredients for cosmetics rather than traditional petroleum-based ingredients. The result is a product family that is less greasy and also has a very high temperature resistance, which means finished products will have a longer shelf life.

Vegetatum™ is a gel-structured botanical emollient that is used as a base in creams and moisturizers, eye shadows, hair products and other cosmetic applications. When applied to the skin it has a protective and smoothing effect. Although you will not see the trade name Vegetatum™ on the back of your makeup bottle, Natunola ingredients are used in product lines from Estee Lauder (and MAC), the Body Shop, Clairol (Herbal Essences), and other familiar brands.

There are six chemists working at Natunola. They are responsible for quality control and research and development. A new cosmetic ingredient will take at least 6 months to develop, as it is put through rigorous testing that includes tests for bacteria growth and temperature resistance.

Han has prototypes of some cosmetic products, used to try out Natunola ingredients. Here is a formula you can try at home. You can also experiment with different types of oil essences. Vegetatum™ is not generally available for consumer use, but you can get a free sample from the company, at: www.natunola.com

Natunola Vegetatum TM Massage Gel (1)

Ingredient	%Wt
Vegetatum™ Clear	q.s.
Natunola™ Canola Oil	10.70
Isopropyl Myristate	15.00
Grapeseed Oil	0.50
Jojoba Oil, Golden	0.20
Eucalyptus Oil	0.05
Spearmint Oil	0.05
Grapefruit Oil, Pink	0.10
Australian Myrtle Oil	0.10
Tocopherol q.s.	q.s.

Procedure: Mix all ingredients at room temperature. Add colour if desired.

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