



My day at Bella's

by [Nan Lincoln](#)

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Being pampered has always made me a bit uncomfortable.

It's not that I don't think I deserve to be pampered from time to time — shoot, everyone does. But I can't help feeling a little embarrassed by all the attention — especially when it involves taking most of my clothes off.



Kristen Tucker from Bella's Skin and Body Boutique.
[NAN LINCOLN](#) PHOTO

So when Kristen Tucker of Bella Skin and Body Boutique in Northeast Harbor called me up a few weeks ago and offered to give me several of the many treatments they offer, I somewhat reluctantly agreed, because it would be a nice little business story for the paper and because my feet hadn't had a pedicure since Cookie Merchant closed shop about three or four years ago.

And then I forgot about it — until about 9:10 last Thursday morning that is, when I was awakened from a deep and dreamy sleep, (I think Bill Clinton appeared at some point) by Ms. Tucker wondering where I was.

Many profuse apologies followed, although I was secretly pleased that I could put the whole thing off for yet another week. But no, Ms. Tucker assured me there was plenty of time for me to make it. Dang!

The thing is, I had planned to wash my hair, trim my nails and apply gallons of oil and lotions to my parched and patchy skin before I intended to let anyone see anything besides my hands and feet and maybe even buy a breezy new outfit from that new "Sea of Cotton" store in Bar Harbor to wear to the spa. Now I had to throw on the wrinkled clothes that were closest at hand and the only prep work I managed was to brush my teeth and gargle.

So I arrived at Bella feeling frazzled, frumpy and just a tetch grouchy about it all, and am greeted by a very pretty woman that somehow just made me grouchier. But she, who turned out to be Ms. Tucker herself, was having none of it and led me into a little room with a massage table; told me to undress to my underwear, put on a little terrycloth wrap and lie on the table for my facial. Then she took my crabby, face in her gentle hands and Well, I don't recall that much of what happened next, except that it felt absolutely wonderful as she massaged all the disgruntle out of my brow, cheekbones and jaw and treated my skin to the nicest series of tingly, prickly, scrubby and silky processes, that left it smooth and clear and, when I looked in a mirror later, more luminous than it has looked in a good long time. At some point during all this Ms. Tucker explained to me that she and several of her staff members are licensed aestheticians who are trained to diagnose and treat all manner of skin problems with well tested products and treatments such as microdermabrasion, acid peels and antioxidant treatments, all of which sound a bit frightening, but make your poor

mistreated, overused, undernourished skin feel and look wonderful. Ms. Tucker also told me she has spotted many early skin cancers and melanomas on the job.

OK. So this wasn't bad at all, and I wondered if maybe I could just spend all my time at Bella in that little room, having other sad body parts ministered to by Ms. Tucker.

But no, time to get dressed and meet nail specialist Nita Rippere who would give me my much-needed pedicure. I pictured a delicate Latina lady who would take one look at my horny toes and cry out "oh, no, no, no, senora, esta es imposible!"



After my free pedicure at Bella's I went out and bought a pair of \$80 sandals at Eden Rising in Bar Harbor to show off my hot pink toes. [NAN LINCOLN PHOTO](#)

Instead, she turned out to be a handsome Floridian, with spiky frosted blond hair and a hearty, gravelly laugh, who reminded me of a younger Elaine Stritch. Without so much as a shudder, she went to work on my toes, essentially giving them the same wonderful attentions my face had received earlier, and kept up such a lively, interesting conversation all the while that by the time she had finished with the last stroke of hot pink polish, I felt as if Nita just might be my new BFF.

By this time I had also managed to raise my chin a bit and look about at the physical presence of Bella. Now, last summer I had visited the new spa at the Bar Harbor Club, which, with its gleaming marble, sparkling glass and splashing, burbling water features was both sumptuous and intimidating. That looked like the sort of place where Paris Hilton or Melania Trump might go to get their calluses scraped. But Bella, which also has a touch of elegance, is a bit more accessible with its painted floors, earthy palette, pretty chandeliers, and it's general ambience of sunlight, wood, and cotton. People I know probably come here on a regular basis, I thought.

In the midst of this musing a friendly attractive young woman who introduced herself as Debby Dewalt, came by and explained that she was from Red Bird restaurant, which is actually in the same building, on Sea Street and said their chef, Jesse Perrin, was preparing me a luncheon and would I like it here on the comfy manicure banquette or in the restaurant proper?

Well it was just about then that I thought, you know, this pampering thing is not so bad after all.

I opted to dine in the Red Bird's casual, attractive lunch- room overlooking a parking lot and the harbor beyond, and learned that at night it transforms itself into a high, full service gourmet restaurant, the likes of which Northeast Harbor hasn't seen since Redfields closed.

What followed was the best pumpkin soup I have ever eaten; it was just slightly warmed with a smooth as satin texture nicely contrasted by an almost sharp citrusy under-flavor, and drizzled with smoky pumpkin and sweet basil oils. Those same lovely textures and tastes were echoed in the perfect crème brulee I was served for dessert, with a subtle almond flavoring, substituting for the citrus. In between was an excellent crabmeat maki roll, which while perhaps not the best I've ever had — a little place in Boston's Chinatown reserves that honor — was way up there in both taste and presentation. I perused the dinner menu as well, which with main courses like poached wild Scottish salmon with roasted figs, rack of lamb with artichokes, peppered beef carpaccio and saffron poached lobster, made a return trip in the evening a firm promise to myself.

As I finished my last luscious spoonful of crème, I realized that my day at Bella was coming to a close. I tried to draw it out a little longer by taking pictures of everything in sight, but eventually, by the time I was reduced to snapping the potted plants, the Bella staff had all gone back to work, pampering other customers. I conquered my feelings of abandonment, and bravely said my good-byes, resisting the urge to cling to the doorway and cry out "Let me stay, Pulleeze!"

The first thing I did when I got to the office was take a picture of my beautiful hot pink toes and mark my calendar for another visit to Bella.

For a complete list of Bella services and products visit:

<http://www.bellaskinandbody.com>.

To check out all of Red Birds offerings visit:

<http://www.redbirdprovisions.com>

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