

Monthly column
SOAP, PERFUMERY & COSMETICS

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A trip to sunny Spain

It was with excitement that I left a rather cold and dreary Salisbury only to find an even colder and drearier Barcelona. As the temperature in London was reported at 20°C the temperature at my destination was 14°C, a far cry from the barmy temperatures of six years ago when I last visited this exciting city for In-Cosmetics.

You would expect that Montjuic-2 would be next door to Montjuic-1, the site of the last show and you would have been very disappointed. From Placa de Espana it was reported to be a 15-minute walk, but even without bags and encumbrances it took 40 minutes. I eventually arrived at a building site and to a queue that stretched out into the rain. No problem I thought, because I have pre-registered. I was wrong, for despite having visited the web site and collected enough numbers and passwords to get me into the MI5 computer, they could not issue the tickets at more than a snail's pace. Two terminals had crashed within minutes of the show opening. This is not acceptable; we do not travel these vast distances to support our industry only to hang around in the wet. Next time, please do me a favour and send the tickets out by post and lay on a bus from the centre of town.

When all is said and done, the show was magnificent. There was plenty to see and plenty of new ideas waiting at almost every booth.

One Swiss company were justly proud of their new web site and I had a very thorough demonstration. I was also shown a natural deodorant based on Hyssop (*Hyssopus officinalis*), and Clove (*Eugenia caryophyllus* or *Syzygium aromaticum*). They also had an extract for the prevention of hair loss based on Rooibos tea (*Aspalanthus linearis*) and a blend of Watercress (*Nasturtium officinale*), Horsetail (*Equisetum arvense*) and Nettle (*Urtica dioica*) as a means of controlling sebum production.

On one (American) stand I was presented with a whole spectrum of natural actives ranging from diosgenin (the precursor to many steroids), aleuritic acid (skin protective), rosmarinic acid (anti-viral, antibacterial) and ursolic acid (a potent anti-inflammatory agent).

In the centre of the exhibition were some Italian friends, who were promoting some old favourite plants, but with distinctly new angles. Horsetail or Shavegrass (*Equisetum arvense*) was shown, but in this case it had been shown to have benefit in anti-aging and firming products, based on a standardised level of flavonoids (quercetin, luteolin, kaempferol and apigenin). They also had an

Ivy (*Hedera helix*) where they had demonstrated the improved drainage effects brought about by the hederacoside C (as opposed to the normally quoted hederagenin), which made this product useful for orange-peel effects in cellulite and for eye contour products. Finally, they showed a *Zanthoxylum alatum* or Szechuan Pepper, which was demonstrated to have a soothing effect on the skin, but which did not demonstrate analgesia.

I stopped for lunch, and after standing in line for more than half an hour discovered that the choice of edible refreshment had diminished to a choice of some unidentifiable muck in a bun or a piece of decrepit quiche. It is not good enough.

The terrestrial plants were not having it all their own way and a new French seaweed derivative based on *Laminaria digitata* and *Chlorella vulgaris* was being shown that had a combination of amino acids and polysaccharides that had a good long term effect on moisturisation levels within the stratum corneum.

One German pharmaceutical company had decided to enter the cosmetic and toiletry market and I was greatly impressed by the quality of their literature and their extracts, which were all standardised to high levels of the active principles. Echinacea (*Echinacea* sp.), Horse Chestnut (*Aescus hippocastanum*), Ginkgo biloba, Saw Palmetto (*Serenoa repens*) and Barberry (*Arctostaphylos uva ursi*) were among those presented with not just a leaflet, but a book on each plant that was packed full of interesting facts and scientific references.

The novel extract on this booth was *Pygeum africana* or *Prunus africana* and was rich in β -sitosterol (13%), and is normally taken for prostrate problems, but also has the properties of increasing skin elasticity and improving hydration. It came with a rich set of scientific data in Spanish, French and English, which will provide a great deal of translation entertainment for those moments when there is not enough to do. (I seem to remember that this plant was extracted by another Italian supplier way back in the early 1990s).

The Dutch were also present and I was pleased to stop by and talk about their new natural quercetin and the quercetin derivatives extracted from *Dimorphandra mollis*. These flavonoids are powerful antioxidants and have a high level of free-radical scavenging activity. Once again I was pleased with the literature provided.

Intrigued by a lump of rock on their stand, I visited a German supplier who was selling a material derived from shale. Their derivative not only could be used not only as an anti-dandruff agent (see March edition of SPC), but was also claimed to be useful for spots, pimples, irritated skin, and even to control sebum production.

An Anglo-American partnership were exploiting the technique of biotransformation to use

enzymes and natural micro-organisms to produce new naturally derived materials. Amongst their portfolio was a natural skin lightener that enhanced tyrosinase inhibition and at the same time provided a high antioxidant activity.

Finally, those American cousins that nobbled me with Kava-Kava at Formulate '99, had a lovely Polynesian oil called Tamanu (*Calophyllum inophyllum*), which has some very interesting skin healing and soothing properties.

A great show which would have profited from better organisation.