

# Sarah Vine Beauty Sleuth

**T**HERE ARE two tribes in beauty-land. One on one side, the organic, knit-your-own cleanser, carb-free, no-sulphate, paraben-phobic, flora-fauna naturalists; on the other the test-tube, double-blind-trials science freaks.

Both are assiduously pursuing the contents of our pockets. And both have their sales pitches.

The nature brigade are less about proven results and more about the experience. They talk about 'harnessing the age-old powers of flowers', and other such hokum. The men in the white coats, meanwhile, are results-driven. They love diagrams and graphs; nothing thrills them like an electron-microscope picture of the dermis.

This rivalry extends not only to products, especially in the lucrative anti-ageing market, but also to treatments. In particular, facials.

These days, it just won't do to pop a few blackheads and plonk on a facemask. There has to be a USP. Some use acupuncture, others pressure-point massage. There's microdermabrasion, light therapy, heat therapy, cold therapy, facial psychotherapy. Ok, I made that last one up. But it's probably only a matter of time.

One particularly curious strand is the farmyard facial. We may be over the fish pedicure, but it's fast being replaced by a veritable menagerie. Literally.

**U**NDISPUTED Queen of the bee-sting facial is Deborah Mitchell, facialist to none other than the Duchess of Cornwall (and possibly Cambridge too).

Now Camilla may be a fine-looking woman, but she is no spring chicken. And yet she does have remarkably good skin for a woman of her age, especially since she's a big fan of the outdoor lifestyle.

Much has been written about the alleged Botox-like effects of bee venom. Being in my line of work, I've tried both, and I can categorically say that, while products containing bee venom definitely condition the skin, making it brighter, tighter and more toned, they can't compete with Botox in terms of longevity and clinical effectiveness.

That said, not everyone wants or can afford Botox. And if what you crave is genuine skin expertise, a wonderful soothing, relaxing experience and an amazing pick-me-up, then Mitchell's your woman.



Illustration: ANDY WARD

## Farm-fresh facials to leave you like a spring chicken!

Of all the facials I've ever had, it sits easily in the top ten, a unique combination of hands-on knowledge and top quality products.

Many facials that offer eye-catching ingredients skimp on the all-important feel-good factor. Not so Mitchell, whose intuition and capacity for empathy borders on the spooky. She's a giver, is Mitchell, and you can sense it from the

minute you meet her. To be honest, she could have been rubbing Vaseline in my face and I still would have left with an inane grin on my face. I would recommend having the course, if you can afford it.

Not so the sheep's placenta facial which is available at Beyond MediSpa, in London's Harvey Nichols. I was expecting this to be quite special; in fact it's a rather

### FIVE OTHER FABULOUS FACIALS

**Decleor:** I've been having Decleor facials since I was in my 20s, and they are always great value for money and superb quality. Choose one to suit your skin type; I have the Collagen Plump and Lift Treatment. From £60, nationwide ([decleor.co.uk](http://decleor.co.uk)).

**Liz Earle:** An hour and a half of lots of massage, solid technique and great products. Signature Facial, £90, nationwide ([lizearle.com](http://lizearle.com)).

**Bliss:** A classic radiance reviver that includes a targeted peel, an energising enzyme pack and three forms of skin-brightening oxygen, including an oxygen wrap and vitaminised O2 spray. Triple Oxygen Facial, £150 for 85 minutes, available at the Bliss London spa, SW3 ([blissworld.co.uk](http://blissworld.co.uk)).

**Elemis:** Lots of lovely massage targeting sagging jowls, cheeks, chin and neck and reducing puffiness and fluid retention along the jawline. Pro-Intense Lift Effect, from £65, nationwide (call 0117 316 1888 for the nearest salon).

**Sarah Chapman:** The perfect pre-event facial, brightening and refreshing tired or dull looking skin for instant firmness and a VIP glow. High Definition Facial, £140, available at the Sarah Chapman Skinesis Clinic, London SW3 ([sarahchapman.net](http://sarahchapman.net)).

ordinary facial with a bit of sanitised sheep's placenta serum added at the end. It was fine as these things go (microdermabrasion, light therapy), but a disappointing experience overall (although the therapist was extremely nice).

Unlike the bee-venom facial, it produced no real improvement to my skin — and certainly not £185 worth. Apparently Victoria Beckham swears by it, which translated from PR speak probably means she tried it once and quite liked it.

■ **BEE-sting facial** ([heavenskinicare.com](http://heavenskinicare.com)) £55, or £250 for a course of five.

■ **SHEEP'S placenta facial** ([beyondmedispa.com](http://beyondmedispa.com)) £185.