



SUSAN WATTS/DAILY NEWS

# IN YOUR FACE

She's guano have it! The key ingredient in a trendy Japanese beauty treatment is ... nightingale droppings

BY ELOISE PARKER

**T**hey say bird droppings on your head bring good luck. When it comes to your skin, that may be true. After a long, hot summer, the change in weather brings dry, flaky skin and clogged pores, and the best cure may come from nature.

"As soon as the temperature goes down, especially on the East Coast, the air is so dry and the skin dehydrates," says Japanese facialist Shizuka Bernstein, who has devised the ultimate treatment for the seasonal change: bird poop.

You may have read about the Geisha Facial, launched this year at midtown's Shizuka New York Day Spa. But I actually bit the bullet and tried it.

This one-of-a-kind facial, which combines nightingale droppings with natural oils to hydrate skin, is fast gaining momentum as a natural alternative to all those scary-sounding chemical peels, and even supermodel Karolina Kurkova has given it the thumbs-up.

"The collagen mask with green tea also adds Vitamin C, which is an antioxidant that helps repair damage done to the skin from sun exposure and UV rays during the summer. UV rays break down collagen, so the mask helps repair any damage," says Bernstein, who will be getting stars red-carpet-ready with the treatment on E!'s "Countdown to the Primetime Emmys" this weekend.

Wrapped in a kimono-style robe, I certainly felt like a pampered star as Bernstein mixed the pure powdered



Shizuka Bernstein of Shizuka New York Day Spa gives the author a Geisha Facial.

poop with brown-rice flour, which masks the somewhat musky smell.

The result is a sweet-smelling, thick, white paste that is massaged into the skin like a superfine exfoliator.

It felt good. Even better, in fact, after a light extraction, hydrating camellia-oil massage and a green-tea and collagen mask, which is all part of the 50-minute skin treat.

Sure, the thick gel mask, complete with cut-out nose and mouth holes, had me feeling more like a Mexican wrestler than a graceful geisha, but once it was removed, my skin definitely looked clearer and garnered more than a few compliments as the day progressed.

"That'd be the bird poop," I boasted.

As for the science: "It works in two ways," explains Shizuka. "A natural enzyme in the powder breaks down dead skin cells, and a protein called guanine gives the skin luster."

The powdered poop was first used by geishas in 18th-century Japan as a way to remove their makeup, which included toxic lead.

"My mother told me about it, so I decided to research it," recalls Shizuka, noting that the process has become increasingly high-tech over the years.

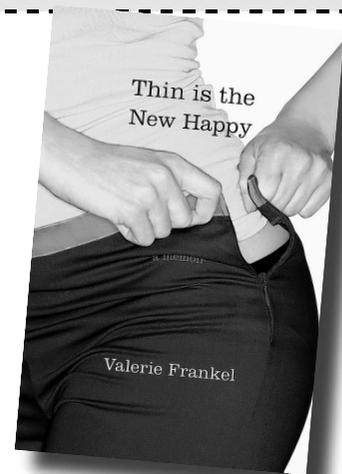
"Nightingales used to be popular pets in Japan, but these days the birds are kept on a farm and given organic food. The droppings are collected, sterilized using ultraviolet rays and then powdered," she says.

All that natural bounty doesn't come cheap; the Geisha Facial will set you back \$180 per session. But for everyone who's wondering whether you could find a cheaper version of the superpoop on the window ledge of your apartment, forget it.

"No, no, no!" exclaimed a horrified Shizuka of the potential bacteria-fest. "Especially not with those Central Park pigeons."

## own it

Your weekly must-have



**THIN IS THE NEW HAPPY**  
By Valerie Frankel

St. Martin's Press, \$23.95

Valerie Frankel is a prolific writer who lives in Brooklyn Heights, is in a loving marriage and has two lovely daughters. But she also had an issue that chased her throughout her life: her stomach.

She was 11, living in Short Hills, N.J., when her fat-phobic mother forced her on the scales and then burst into tears when it registered 100 pounds. The family was going on a Club Med vacation, and her mother wasn't about to be embarrassed by a chubby daughter in a two-piece.

So a six-week diet was instituted, and at the end there were tears again. Valerie was down to only 88 pounds.

After the trip, she starting eating again, gained some weight and figured it out pretty quickly. "I could have food. Or I could have approval. I couldn't have both."

That's when she became a diet addict. "I'm not an emotional eater, per se. I'm an emotional dieter."

In the end, every diet took her further from her goal weight (at 5-feet-5, she was aiming for 135 pounds). She realized that she would be dieting until she was too old to feed herself. Even when her beloved husband was dying of lung cancer and she was awash in fear and sorrow, she took "supreme joy" at the weight she was losing.

Vicky festered for five years until a lovely man, who would later become her second husband, told her "I adore every inch of your body. And it would be even better if you could get rid of the stomach."

In her early 40s, Valerie decided it was time to go cold turkey on dieting. She took unusual steps to exercise her malevolent body image. For instance, she posed nude for *Self*, the magazine where she worked. And, yes, she had a little talk with her mother.

Valerie reports that as a committed nondieter, she has come down two dress sizes and continues to eat well and exercise for the right reasons.

Or, as she puts it: "You have to love your body as a living organism, not hate it as a flawed decorative statue."

She really does have a point.

Sherryl Connolly