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Cover Story

Face to Face with Celebrity Skincare Expert Enrique Ramirez
photos by wilsonmodels

A native of Mexico, Enrique Ramirez is the founder and owner of New York City's very trendy day spa, face to face nyc, one of only a handful of spas not just in the country, but around the globe, that specializes in men's skincare. Hidden in a quiet, ordinary building in New York City's Flatiron District lies the strikingly modern, yet minimalistic spa, which features a palette of both men's and women's treatments, including everything from A-rated massages and skincare therapies to waxings, sunless tanning treatments and slimming body wraps. Enrique has become world-famous for his ability to take what once was a clandestine and unnecessarily awkward luxury for men, and has proven time and time again that men too can be pampered without having to feel any shame. Since being founded in 2004, Enrique's spa has had many celebrity clients, including actor and comedian Neil Patrick Harris, and news and weather anchor Sam Champion. Enrique has been featured on the NBC Today Show, Howard Stern Show and is a recurring skincare expert on SiriusXM Radio's "Derek & Romaine" and LA Talk Radio's "Question Reality with Priscilla Leona." In addition, he has been featured in close to 100 mainstream beauty, skincare and fashion publications for his consummate knowledge.

Enrique, welcome to PULP! It is a pleasure to have you.
Thank you very much! I really appreciate you guys including me in your magazine. I feel honored.

You founded face to face nyc in 2004. What did you do prior to that?

The official starting year was 2004 for face to face nyc—day spa, but prior to that, I worked from my living room on the lower east side of Manhattan since 2002 doing massage and grooming. A year into it, I began incorporating facials.

What made you get into skincare?

I worked as a medical assistant for a dermatologist in the early '90s while living in Chicago. I was introduced to skincare, both medically and cosmetically. The doctor taught me how to recognize skin cancer and also how to control my ever-present eczema. It took me another 10 years before I signed up at the Christine Valmy School of Esthetics.

Even more specifically, why specialize in men's skincare?

It's an unfortunate reality that many of my female colleagues are not well trained in men's skincare. In beauty school, most skincare guidelines are focused on women, and men's concerns go unnoticed such as ingrown hairs or razor burn which this comes from routine shaving. As a male esthetician, I understand men's skin needs in a more comprehensive way. I can tell when a guy uses the same razor for weeks—keep in mind that the blade gets dull, which then irritates the skin tremendously.

Aren't those who frequently go to the spa women?

For many decades women dominated the spa world until recent years. Men now make up nearly a third of all spa-goers, according to the International Spa Association.

How hard was it to go it alone, and form your own spa?

It was extremely difficult while I was employed by other spas to get started and develop a following. Most spa-goers are used to be seen by women and whenever I'd walk into the waiting area, the clients—both men and women—would give me a perplexed look. Some clients wouldn't want to book with me because of my gender. This was the main reason to get out and start my own business. In terms of starting my own spa, it was certainly a challenge. I love what I do but, honestly, I had to learn a lot about the business side of the business, which still continues to be a challenge. Lucky for me, I have my boyfriend who's excellent at keeping my bank account and payroll in order.

Here in Palm Springs, the air is incredibly dry, essentially desert air. Any tips for us?

Broad spectrum sun block! I can't stress that enough. The key with sun block is the reapplication. For safety reason, reapply at least every two to three hours on the face, ears, neck and upper chest. Many times I can tell when a client is from the south simply by the amount of sun damage on his skin.

Things to watch out for?

At night, the skin regenerates and you want to apply a lightweight moisturizer with no SPF. Your skin needs vitamins and minerals for nourishment. Some men mistakenly apply the same moisturizer for day at night. During the day you want protection and at night your skin needs moisture. Basic products to keep in your bathroom: Day and night moisturizer, liquid cleanser, weekly use of an exfoliant. I always recommend shaving gel which has glycerin, allowing the blade to glide easier while you shave—and please change your razors often.

What's the most popular spa treatment you offer your clients?

The Backdoor Treatment and Marble Sac are the top two waxing treatments (of choice) by men here in New York. The Y-Chromosome Facial is the most requested facial—it's a combination of deep pore cleansing with anti-aging effects using





microdermabrasion.

Do you have a personal favorite that you've created over the years?

I have two: The Betty Ford Treatment and the Forget Me Knots. Both combine a facial and massage. My clients really like that I get to rub out their knots and clean their pores in one visit without having to switch rooms or technicians. The Betty Ford comes with a body wrap. It feels amazing to be in a warm cocoon while getting a facial.

What is the difference between men's skin and women's skin?

Men, in general, do very little to care for their skin at home. When a man lies in front of me, I can see more surface dehydration due to lack of moisturizer use and I also see more skin debris from not cleaning their skin properly.

Are they both very different?

Women tend to be more on the dry/sensitive side and men tend to have the oily, blackhead-prone skin. Also, men suffer from razor burn and ingrown hairs and all this comes from constant shaving and again, from lack of good product use. One thing they have in common is they both share the same aging concerns as well as the desire to look good.

Now let's talk about your body. What skincare routines have you adopted for yourself?

I'm all about smoothness. I wax on a monthly basis as well as getting anti-aging facials to keep my skin looking fresh. I follow a good at-home regimen. It helps that skincare companies give me free samples. It can get expensive, especially when walking into a department store; the salesperson can offer more products than your skin really needs. I'm also addicted to body scrubs. In the summertime, I wear very little and I want my skin to glow and have a healthy look. Like many guys, I strive to look like that hot guy on the cover of Men's Health—with healthy hair, skin and a fit body.

You were born in Mexico. You now live in New York. Have you lived anywhere in between?

I was born in Mexico and raised on the south side of Chicago. I also traveled a lot with a Navy officer who was my second boyfriend. I was indirectly 'married' to the military. The fun part was that I got to travel to many naval ports in the U. S.

Was it a culture shock coming here to America?

I don't recall much. I was only four when my parents left our small town in Mexico. I only remember eating a lot of cookies and milk ... I guess that's an international kids' thing.

With a Mexican heritage, what was it like coming out to your family?

I don't have a coming out story. I've always been out.

What was it like being featured on major TV and radio shows, such as the NBC Today Show and Howard Stern Show?

It was so much fun! I was a little afraid of Howard, but he immediately put me at ease and was extremely cool with my gayness. George Takei was very flirty and funny! My heterosexual male following did increase after the Howard show.

Are you planning to open up any spas here on the West Coast?

I love L.A.! And I feel confident that the men in L.A. and the surrounding areas would benefit from my spa services. So yes, opening a spa in SoCal is on my beauty radar...

You've done a lot of work with charitable causes. Can you tell us about some of them?

The lack of HIV medicine in the '80s left me with almost no friends, therefore HIV/AIDS has always been my number one cause. Glad to know that we now have good medications that allow people to live longer and healthier. My first boyfriend, Mark, died in 1991 and left me with despair and feeling powerless. Now, every chance I get I donate spa treatments to HIV charities to raise money and awareness.

Any you'd like to work with in the future?

I'm seriously considering working with Sylvia's Children (an organization that works with orphans in Africa living with HIV/AIDS).

What is the most important advice you could ever give about taking care of our skin?

Seek a reputable spa in your area to get a deep pore cleansing facial, or anti-aging, at least every month and get the skincare expert to recommend products to follow a good at-home regimen. Be realistic and select the products that you will use. If it starts to feel like a chore then your skin won't achieve the goals that you desire. Use the same analogy as going to the gym. Also, find a dermatologist in your area and book a yearly skin cancer screening.

Enrique, it has been a pleasure! What can we look forward to from you in the future?

I'm currently working on creating my own skincare line. The basis of the line is going to be simple yet, effective. Many guys get confused with too many products and will leave them sitting on their shelves only to collect dust. Every man deserves fresh, healthy-looking skin and I will make it my 'pore' business to help them achieve their skincare goals.



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