



For women in Rio de Janeiro, salons are a place to socialize

HAIR REPORT

MANE NATION

The epicenter of good hair is 3,500 miles due south, in Brazil. Larissa Gomes explains why her country is a hotbed of product and treatment innovation

Shampoo. Conditioner. Mask. Combing cream. Leave-in. Every single time I wash my hair, I use five separate products. Sound like a bit much? Well, I'm Brazilian, and in my country that's the average number women use every day. Just as Korean and Japanese women are world-renowned for their multistep skin regimens, we Brazilians are obsessed with haircare. In fact, many of us carry travel-size hair products in our purses instead of makeup compacts. My girlfriends with curls might tote around an oil or anti-frizz serum, while those with straight strands use leave-ins to touch up their ends throughout the day. The country's humid weather could be one of the reasons we do this, but I've been living in New York City for three years and still can't leave the house without a mini-spray of volumizer for my thin hair. And as more and more hair companies look to Brazil for inspiration, I predict it won't be long

before American women are carrying around touch-up stylers, too. After all, many of the trends we start quickly become international sensations. (Brazilian blowout sound familiar?)

SALON SECRETS

It's possible that the country has become a mecca for hair breakthroughs because we have a diverse population with many different hair types, but we Brazilians also make good test subjects: We're risk-takers when it comes to new beauty treatments—we'll try anything that promises fast results. (How else to explain the popularity of those aforementioned blowouts? The original formulas were so quick and effective that everyone ignored the fact that they contained formaldehyde, a known carcinogen.)

Speaking of bravery, Rio de Janeiro stylist Zica Assis is the perfect example of how far local women will go for a new look; she's actually lost hair while road-testing products. But apparently it was all worth it: Assis, who used to be a house cleaner, is now co-owner of

Beleza Natural, a mini-chain of salons in five Brazilian states, and was named one of the 10 most powerful businesswomen in Brazil by *Forbes*. She also developed the popular in-salon treatment Super-Relaxante. "I have curly hair, like most of the Brazilian population, and I wanted something specifically for our hair type," she explains. "After 10 years of testing, I came up with Super-Relaxante, which hydrates curls and makes them more manageable without straightening the curl shape at all." Leila Velez, cofounder of the salons, says they're hoping to bring the treatment, which takes about 50 minutes and costs \$160, to the United States soon. "I want American women to experience the natural beauty of black hair instead of using extensions or wigs," Velez says.

Another salon service you may have seen photos of in your Instagram feed is *velaterapia*, the "candle therapy" endorsed by Brazilian models like Alessandra Ambrosio and Barbara Fialho. The meticulous treatment takes about three hours and involves twisting sections of hair and then running the open flame of a

candle up and down the lengths to burn off split ends. While it can be dangerous if done by inexperienced practitioners, Ambrosio and Fialho got the service at Laces and Hair Salon Spa in São Paulo, which is owned by Cris Dios, the granddaughter of the man who invented the technique. “He always believed in treating hair with natural methods and ingredients instead of chemicals,” Dios says. Her salon is also responsible for popularizing the *corte bordado*, or “embroidered cut,” in which a stylist uses scissors to snip split ends and damaged sections along the entire length of the hair without changing the length or altering the style (the service takes about a half hour and costs approximately \$90).

Many of these Brazilian salon services are available in the U.S. at Maria Bonita Salon & Spa in New York City (Lays Silva and Victoria’s Secret model Laís Ribeiro have gotten *velaterapia* there). The owner, Fernanda Lacerda, opened the salon 13 years ago. “Our reputation definitely grew as the Brazilian models became more well-known,” she says. “Who doesn’t want Gisele Bündchen’s hair?” The salon’s latest offering is a hair-detox clarifying treatment that features oils and tea leaves sourced from Brazil.

BOTTLE ENVY

Remember my five daily products? I use them to make my strands fuller and smoother, but not stiff—and apparently I’m not the only one after that look. “Brazilians want at-home products that help control the hair while keeping its natural movement,” says Blaise Didillon, director of research and innovation at L’Oréal Brazil, who adds that Americans are starting to follow their lead.

Lisa Price, founder of Carol’s Daughter, a beauty company started in Brooklyn (and now owned by L’Oréal), recently traveled to Brazil on a scouting trip. While there, she discovered *cremes para pentear*, or “combing creams,” and decided to create her own version for American women. “They’re a perfect hybrid of

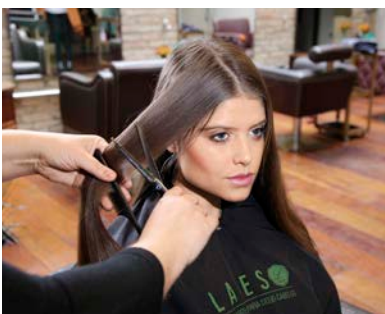
BRAZILIAN SPECIALITIES



A stylist burns off a client’s split ends during *velaterapia*, or “candle therapy”



In Brazil, it’s not unusual to visit the salon weekly for treatments



Laces and Hair Salon Spa in São Paulo is well-known for offering the *corte bordado*, or “embroidered cut”

styling and care,” she says. “You get moisture and detangling, like you would from a treatment product, but there are also benefits like frizz control, curl definition, or shine—depending on the one you use.” Haircare giants Tresemmé, Garnier, and Pantene already make *cremes para pentear* for Brazil, so it’s probably just a matter of time before combing creams are part of American women’s daily routines.

Shock treatments (or *ampolas vitaminas*, “vitamin ampules”) may also be on the way in. “That’s the Brazilian term for deep-conditioning treatments,” explains Avon’s executive director of global innovation, Alina Gonzalez, who has created hair products for the Brazilian market. The treatments are either hair masks in jars or single-use capsules, and they can be done at home or in the salon. “Shock treatments could easily become popular in the U.S.,” Gonzalez says. Another trend on the rise in Brazil: blending a small amount of hair dye that matches your natural color with a deep-conditioning mask and applying the mixture to your strands to add shine and to intensify the color.

More new products will be in development soon if L’Oréal has its way. The company is currently building a center for research and innovation in Brazil that opens next year. “Brazilians are demanding consumers in haircare, and they play a lot with the shape of their hair,” says Didillon. “We are continuously inspired by them.”

I, for one, am flattered to be a muse for the beauty companies of the world, but hair is about more than products for Brazilians. The condition of our strands is a reflection of our self-confidence and self-worth, and doing an at-home hair treatment at the end of a long day is like therapy for us. Visiting the salon is such an important part of our culture that we usually end up becoming friends with our stylists. We don’t think it’s a waste of time or an unnecessary expense to take care of ourselves—it’s a long-term investment. **mc**

SOUTHERN INSPIRATION *Brazil influences new hair products just as Korea has sway over skincare*



Josie Maran Argan Balm (\$42) is great for touching-up your hair throughout the day, Brazilian-style.



SheaMoisture Superfruit Complex 10-in-1 Renewal System Hair & Scalp Serum (\$11) features extract of açai, an antioxidant-packed Brazilian berry.



The OGX Brazilian Keratin Therapy Shampoo and Conditioner (\$6 each) smooth hair with hydrolyzed keratin protein and Brazilian cocoa nut oil.



Carol’s Daughter Hair Milk Nourish & Condition Combing Cream (\$10) is inspired by Brazilian *cremes para pentear*.



Stylists in the U.S. use the **Split-Ender Pro** to do the Brazilian “embroidered cut.” (Prices vary; find a salon that offers the service at splitenderpro.com.)

For information on where to buy, see Shopping Directory.