

MORE BEST BETS

Monica Yearwood, Soulistic Studio & Spa

Yearwood's combined training in massage therapy and ayurvedic studies (traditional Indian medicine) offers the best of both worlds. After my 30-minute consultation over tea and the subsequent Indian head, hand and foot massage (customized with essential oils), I'm ready to sign up for an ayurvedic lifestyle. *60-minute ayurvedic massage starts at \$95.*

Jennifer Clower, Lustre Skin Boutique

When opening Lustre with her partner, Cynthia Mueller, four years ago, Clower had a mission: provide treatments aggressive enough to improve clients' skin and relaxing enough so they'll return. She shows a merciless attention to detail with extractions during my glycolic peel, but between the citrus-scented toner and Clower's massage, my face feels more beautified than battered. *45- to 60-minute facials \$85-\$135.*

Nancy Nguyen, Stylish Nails

What this nail salon lacks in frills—fake flowers and a TV tuned to *The View*—Nguyen makes up for with her immaculate cuticle trimming and paint job. I can barely stop rubbing my baby-soft hands together long enough to pay up the affordable Monday through Wednesday bill. *Mani-pedi Mon–Wed \$27; Thu–Sun manicures \$11, pedicures \$20, mani-pedi \$30.*—JH



SEEING RED Work out your kinks Thai yoga-style in Soulistic's Fire Room.

PHOTOS: LEFT, ANDREW NAWROCKI; RIGHT, JEREMY BOLEN



HANDS UP The Four Seasons' Lisette Paez performs perfect mani-pedis—with a smidge of chocolate.

Mag Mile River North Gold Coast
LISETTE PAEZ
FOUR SEASONS

When I inform Paez of my pathetic record with manicures—I destroy them on day one—she takes it as a challenge, helping me choose a long-lasting nail polish and declaring that *her* manicures should last a week. Then, at some point during my Chocolate-Orange Dipped mani-pedi—probably around the time she rubs my feet with citrus exfoliant after serving me a chocolate martini—I enter a state of bliss.

A nail maestro for 12 years, Paez is the lead nail technician at the Four Seasons, where she's worked for eight years. She's hush-hush about her celebrity customers but admits one wealthy client visits from Europe every six months and will only go to Paez for pedis: "She has a blood disorder, and I'm the only one she trusts with her feet."

Despite the economic downturn, motorcycle/snowmobile-enthusiast Paez boasts a full schedule, including regulars with standing appointments. It doesn't hurt that besides her training at Chicago's well-regarded hair and beauty school Pivot Point International, she's certified in reflexology—essentially foot rubs that focus on specific pressure points—which she often incorporates into treatments. Paez considers this work her calling. "I am gifted in my hands and very knowledgeable and I have the heart to do [this work], to serve people humbly and give quality service," she says.

I can't argue about the "calling" part: Paez's mani lasts three days—for me, a record. *Mani-pedi \$140, including chocolate martini.*—Gretchen Kalwinski

This is how we did it

Follow the strategies we used to zero in on the fab aestheticians featured in this issue:

- Ask around. Most therapists get clients through word of mouth.
- Call the spa and ask the receptionist who gets the most repeat customers. Also, get some background info on your therapist

before you book. If you want a sports massage, you'd rather have a runner or athlete working on you than someone who specializes in gentle prenatal massage.

- Search Yelp for recs, but be wary: People who post comments can have an agenda, either positive or negative. But if posters tout one person repeatedly, that's probably a safe bet.

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Royale Walker, Trump Spa

Walker says it's her intuition that distinguishes her from other therapists. "I'm very spiritual and try to get a deep understanding of my clients." Walker customizes my massage with essential oils and stretching, then gives me a mind-bending craniosacral massage. *60-minute Custom Trump massage \$200.*

Alessandra Rosa, exhale Chicago

Rosa has a rep for being a brow maestro. Only using wax designed for sensitive skin, she uses a mix of waxing, plucking and trimming to produce the perfect brow. My arches look so good I later get my bangs trimmed to show them off. *\$35 per brow shaping or six for \$190.*

Fred Goudy, Bliss

During my triple-oxygen facial, Goudy massages my spastic shoulders to Zenlike results, applies Bliss's lemon-sage products and finishes with an oxygen "blast" on my face, effectively rejuvenating my now-pink, glowy and zit-free mug. *90-minute facial \$150.*—GK



SQUEAKY CLEAN Bathe with your sweetie in the couples treatment room at Trump Spa.

Extend the bliss

Coq d'Or
140 E Walton Pl, 312-932-4623
If your shoulders still carry any tension after your treatment, they'll relax completely once you're sitting in a red leather booth, martini in hand, at this intimate, dimly lit bar in the Drake Hotel.

More Cupcakes
1 E Delaware Pl, 312-951-0001
It's hard to go wrong with cake and frosting, and More's cupcakes are especially delectable. Nab a maple, salted caramel or seasonally flavored cake and sit at a table with a magazine to soak up the boutiquey, modern vibe. Okay, to really soak it up, you might need two cupcakes.