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THE TREATMENT

By Amber Gibson



Beer Bath

A Denver spa makes the dream of soaking in suds a reality

A beer bath might sound like a distinctly collegiate activity, but at one Denver spa, it's a decidedly adult way to achieve a state of relaxation.

At least that's what I'm experiencing at The Beer Spa, in the Mile High City's hip Five Points neighborhood, as I soak in a bath of blackberry leaf, cashmere hops, and pale and crystal malts from Odell Brewing Company's Hazer Tag IPA. The mix isn't actually an ale or lager, but rather a sort of warm beer tea that my friendly "beer therapist" tells me will make my skin more supple and smooth—thanks to its antioxidant properties—and will help me chill out due to the sedative effect of hops (a member of the hemp family).

While a beer spa may seem like a quintessentially Denver concept, founders Jessica French and Damien Zouaoui admit they didn't come up with it entirely on their own. The Franco-American husband-and-wife team were inspired by an evening spent sitting in a communal wooden-barrel hot tub, drinking unlimited pints of beer in the mountain resort town of Zakopane, Poland.



"We knew that this was the business idea we had been searching for," French says. "It combines so many things that we love: craft beer, hospitality, and wellness." The first-time entrepreneurs spent seven months bathing around the world—from thermal baths in Hungary to *onsens* in Japan—in the name of research (talk about making a clean start!) and opened their place last year.

Today, their business is part day spa, part taproom, where a different Colorado brewery is featured each month and wine, cider, and kombucha are also on offer. Guests can sip cold beverages while sweating out toxins in a private



infrared sauna or soaking in a cedar hydrotherapy tub. French explains that the boozy element is a way to entice patrons who perhaps don't have home wellness regimens.

"Nearly half of our guests are first-time spa-goers, typically coerced to come to The Beer Spa by their partner with the promise of beer," she says. "But by the end of their experience, that person is often the one begging their partner to come back!"

From top: body products at The Beer Spa; a beer bath for two; the storefront in Denver's trendy Five Points; the self-serve taproom

Courtesy of The Beer Spa (all photos)

THE MEAL

By Amber Gibson
Photography by Katrina Frederick Studio



Roll Reversal

The California roll was invented sometime in the 1960s or '70s and went on to become ubiquitous at American sushi joints. Now, in the fusion dish's spiritual home of Los Angeles, fourth-generation Japanese-American chef Chris Ono has created an elevated version—this one more of a canapé than a roll—at Hansei, a temporary “LA Nikkei” dining experience at DTLA’s Japanese American Cultural and Community Center. “I had to fail a lot to get the layers just right,” Ono says, “but diners say it’s the best California roll they’ve ever had.”



- A piece of **tempura-battered nori** offers a strong base. To get the nori perfectly crunchy, Ono fries it at 300 degrees—“I need the nori chip to be flat,” he says, “and if you fry at higher temperatures, it’ll curl up and shrink”—and then dehydrates it for at least four hours.

- Ono replaces the standard imitation crab with an ounce of fresh **Dungeness crab** from California or Oregon. “It is essential for the crab to be cooked that day,” the chef says, “to ensure the soft, sweet, and creamy texture.”

- The **avocado** is sliced thinly, rather than chopped into chunks, to make it easier to mold the slender pieces around the crab.

- **Raw cucumber** makes two appearances—diced on the top and layered in thin slices between the nori chip and crab—for double the crunch. “I use Japanese cucumbers because they are firmer, have fuller flavor, and don’t have as many seeds,” Ono says.

- “Dungeness crab and **Santa Barbara sea urchin** are a match made in seafood heaven,” Ono says. Coarse crystalized soy powder underneath the *uni* adds a delicate touch of salt and keeps the custard-like urchin from slipping off.