

# VITA

YOUR LIFESTYLE SUPPLEMENT FROM VTDAILY.CA • JULY 2020

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# EDITOR'S DESK



Model Ashley B. Chew, at NYFW 2015, carried a tote painted with the words “Black Models Matter,” calling for diversity on the runway and behind the scenes in fashion. In an interview with *Fashionista*, Chew said, “The fashion industry is really cutthroat. ... Light, medium or dark—you’re going to be treated as Black ... it’s been an issue for a while. There’s nothing worse than getting turned down for your natural composition.”

With #BlackLivesMatter front of mind (as it should be), this issue of *VITA* is devoted in large part to celebrating the Black community, from our cover (Samile Bermannelli in **Balmain** by creative director Olivier Rousteing) to our shopping roundup to our wine column. Plus, we’ve provided ample promo space to Canadian POC-owned brands. Join us in lifting these individuals and businesses up. It will make for a more wonderful world now, and for generations to come.

*Noa Nichol*  
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

@VITADAILY.CA  
@VITADAILY.CA  
@VITADAILYVAN  
NOA@VITAMINDAILY.COM  
VITADAILY.CA



“The fashion industry is really cutthroat. ... Light, medium or dark—you’re going to be treated as Black. I feel this is why ‘Black Models Matter’ created such a buzz, because it’s been an issue for a while. There’s nothing worse than getting turned down for your natural composition”

**VITA**

PUBLISHED BY **VITA DAILY MEDIA INC.** EDITOR-IN-CHIEF **NOA NICHOL** CREATIVE DIRECTOR **MADISON HOPE VEITCH** SOCIAL MEDIA MANAGER **VICKI DUONG** CONTRIBUTORS **LYNDI BARRETT LOUISA CHAN JEANINE GORDON ALEESHA HARRIS AILEEN LALOR LAURA STARR** COVER **BALMAIN SPRING 2020 READY-TO-WEAR** CANADA POST PUBLICATIONS MAIL AGREEMENT #42849020

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DESIGNS



# FASHION & SHOPPING



# BLACK *bi*z

These round red Kimia earrings (\$19) by **Khimia Designs** are the perfect cherry-like topping to any summer outfit. [Khimiadesigns.com](http://Khimiadesigns.com)



**Sadé Awele**

@SADE\_AWELE



## INFLUENCER PICK

I love how Canadian fashion designer **Israella Kobla** incorporated angles and shapes to create this pretty Pinnacle bag (\$85). It's a trend with all her designs—she has a very unique eye. I also love, love, love the colour. [Israellakobla.com](http://Israellakobla.com)

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lifestyle

## STYLISH PICKS FROM LOCAL AND CANADIAN POC-RUN BRANDS



"After spending most of spring in slippers, my feet are craving something special—like these stunning Summer Stell mules (\$655 US) with ruffle detail by **Brother Vellies**, whose founder, Aurora James, hails from Toronto and is the voice behind the 15 Percent Pledge, which asks major retailers to dedicate shelf space to Black-owned businesses." [Brothervellies.com](http://Brothervellies.com)

Don the loungewear of your dreams with these **Cherry Gardens** high-waisted July Undies (\$55). They're minimal, quality-focused and made (in Toronto) to celebrate the body—no matter the type. [Shopcherrygardens.com](http://Shopcherrygardens.com)



Get the bread spread Beyoncé's into! **Mumgry** nut butter, in flavours like peanut, chocolate peanut, and pistachio chocolate almond (from \$9 each) are plant-based, low in sugar, high in protein, iron and calcium, and made in Vancouver, to boot. [Mumgry.com](http://Mumgry.com)



Add some global décor to your home with this fair-trade pillow (\$35) from **Batiqua**. The pattern is made using a porridge resist batik technique that originates in Zimbabwe. [Batiqua.com](http://Batiqua.com)



"The tension between form and function can sometimes be tough when it comes to décor, but that's not the case with this **Baba Tree Pakurigo basket** (\$200 from **Goodee**) and its wave-like silhouette. Handwoven with vetiver grass by Ghanaian artisans, this is a classic piece that (usefully!) fits every style. If you have a penchant for colour, you're in luck: this beauty also comes in a variety of palettes and patterns." [Goodeeworld.com](http://Goodeeworld.com)



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"Rethink what you've been told about soap because **Nectrous Botanicals'** Terrazzo bar (\$12) will cleanse without stripping. Not only is this vegan creation a beautiful addition to your skincare routine (and your bathroom counter), it's formulated by Vancouverite Alexandra Hulley with good-for-you ingredients like French pink clay, spirulina and carrot powder." [Nectrous.com](http://Nectrous.com)



Store your stuff in style. Woven by hand in Kenya using hand-split-and-twisted sisal, this **Kiondo basket** (\$150 at **Kasandy**) is modern, beautifully designed and very durable. 1660 Duranleau St., 778-385-4480. [Kasandy.com](http://Kasandy.com)



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July's It Bag

BY ALEESHA HARRIS



Brooklyn-based brand **Brother Vellies** has a cool Canadian connection in its creative director and founder, Aurora James. Originally from Toronto, James built her brand around offering distinctive pieces that employ traditional African design practices, including shoes, handbags and small leather goods—each one ethically made using fair-trade pricing in South Africa, Kenya, Mexico, Morocco, Ethiopia, Burkina Faso, Italy, Haiti and New York City. While the full collection of shoes is entirely covetable, it was this Nile Handbag in lavender (\$1,329) that captured our attention. The small, structured bag is crafted from crocodile embossed leather in a pretty pastel hue for a pop of summery style. [Brothervellies.com](http://Brothervellies.com)

# FASHION & SHOPPING



Made of African wax fabric, each unisex **Hogan's Alley** bomber jacket (from \$138) is handmade in Canada. [Hogansalleyclothing.com](http://Hogansalleyclothing.com)

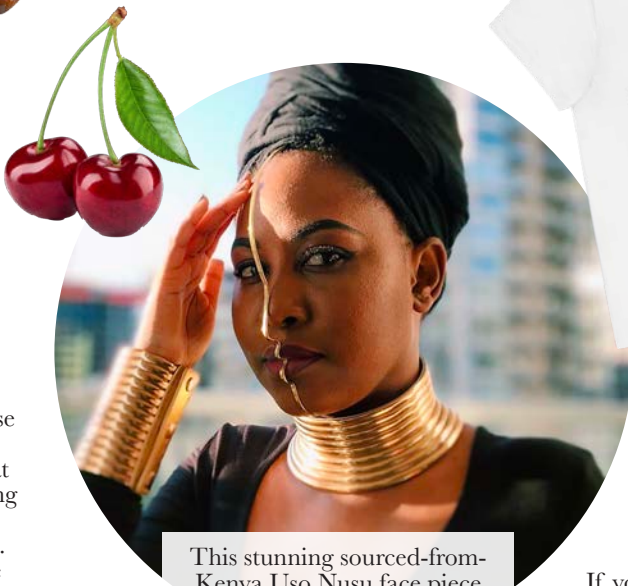


**Karibu Soaps'** hand-cut lemongrass bars are dedicated to the brand's new #BLM followers and supporters, as well as those who have been with this small, local maker from the start. [@karibusoaps](https://www.karibusoaps.com)

This Afro crop tee (\$38), sewn to fit just right, boasts an original all-over design that's definitely got a summer-style vibe going. [Kurentdesigns.com](http://Kurentdesigns.com)



From its Eau Noir collection, **Tafui's** Rippled Charcoal pillow (\$190) is inspired by the movement of fallen forest leaves and bits of broken branches making waves in cold winter water. [Shoptafui.com](http://Shoptafui.com)



This stunning sourced-from-Kenya **Uso Nusu** face piece (\$220 from **Kali Works**) is made of brass and can be adjusted to fit most profiles. [Kaliworks.com](http://Kaliworks.com)



If you want one-of-a-kind apparel from **Sleepless Mindz**, don't hesitate! These hand-painted-with-love pieces—like this pair of Floating Blue high-waisted vintage acid-wash jeans (\$130)—sell out in a snap! [Sleeplessmindz.com](http://Sleeplessmindz.com)



A sunny way to tote your stuff around all summer! This yellow-and-dark-beige basket (\$115 from **Boostani**) is handwoven in Kenya using sisal fibre and finished with leather trim and handles. [Boostani.ca](http://Boostani.ca)



"Another summer, another excuse to buy a bikini! I'm a bit of a swimsuit hoarder—er, make that collector—and am happily adding one of **Selfish Swimwear's** mix-and-match sets to my stash. My top pick for this season: the Black-owned brand's **Analie** bottom and **Marina** strapless top (\$90 each), both in a hot-weather-worthy tropical print and made by hand in Montreal." [Selfishswimwear.com](http://Selfishswimwear.com)



## Jadesola Samuel

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@KINGDOM\_\_MERC

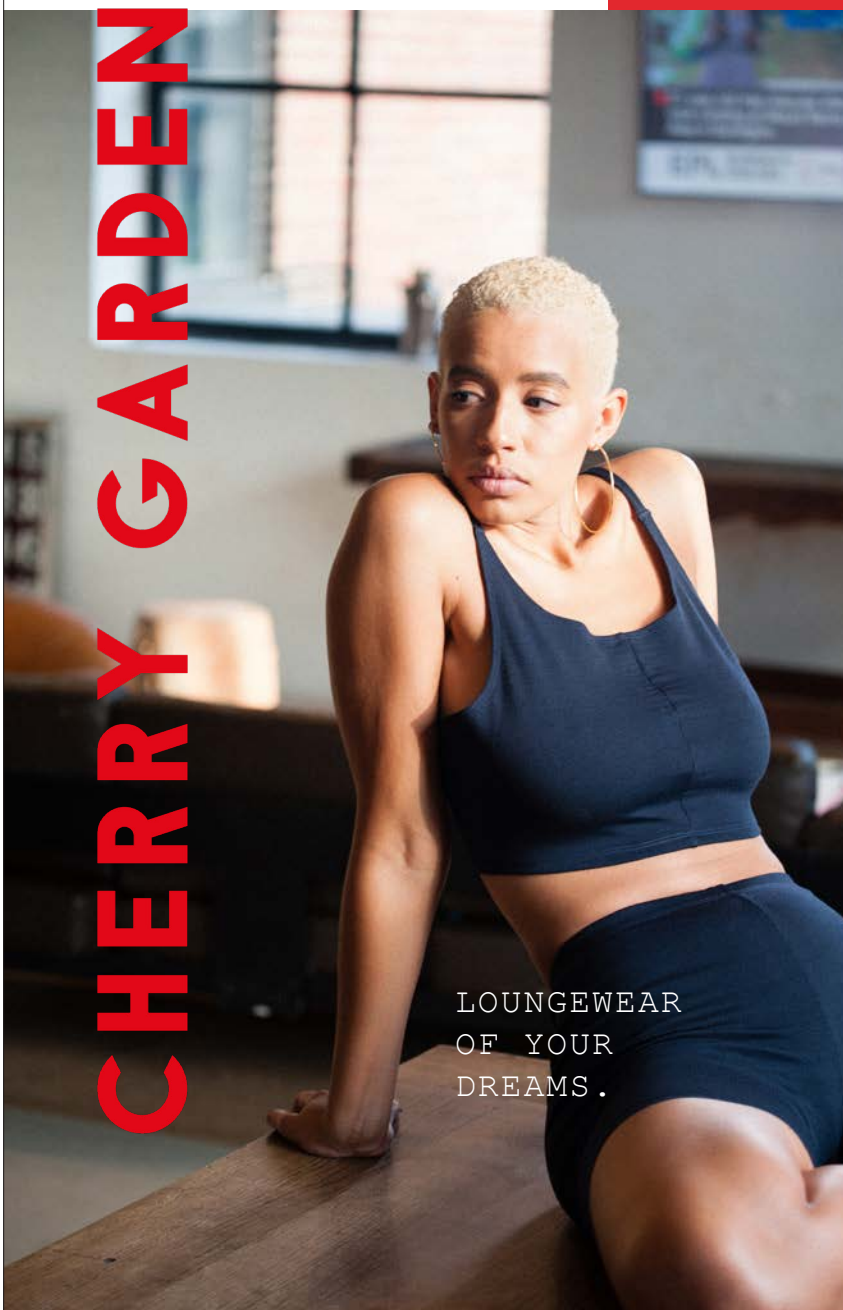


### INFLUENCER PICK

I really love my Pop Wrap head scarf (\$22) from **Fashion Voice**. It really represents my culture and is just a beautiful statement piece. [Fashionvoice.co](http://Fashionvoice.co)

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# Retail Rules

BOUTIQUES ARE GREETING VANCOUVERITES WITH ENDLESS OPTIONS FOR AN ELEVATED WAY TO GET THEIR POST-PANDEMIC FASHION FIX  
BY JEANINE GORDON

T

Their world forever altered by COVID-19, retailers are adapting and re-opening as shoppers take to the stores for some long-anticipated fashion therapy. Fortunately, the future is bright for business owners who are adopting the “new normal,” and for customers who are enjoying a more luxurious shopping experience than ever.

Of course, significant changes were required. Loredana Grama, **Nordstrom** Pacific Centre store manager says, “We’ve made some updates to the way we serve customers to help keep them and our employees healthy.” For Nordstrom and other retailers this means new measures like reduced hours, increased cleaning, hand-sanitizer stations, signage to help customers maintain distancing and staff members wearing masks.

Vice-president and GM of Vancouver Downtown **Hudson’s Bay** Brahm Kornbluth emphasizes working to “ensure a shopping experience that is as safe, easy and comfortable as possible.” Along with in-store health protocols, the Bay rolled out new shopping services. “We introduced contactless



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“ We’ve made special designer-branded face masks—Chanel, Gucci, Louis Vuitton and more—and all customers will receive complimentary hand-painted red-nail gloves to take home ”

curbside pickup where customers can purchase products [online] and pick up at a store in as little as three hours. We have a live-chat function for customers to speak directly with associates in our stores for support and questions while shopping online,” he says.

Stores that closed abruptly needed to get online—and do it quickly. “We just had to launch our e-commerce in any way we could, going with the flow and staying agile. We also needed get creative with continuing our exceptional customer service, offering hand delivery to clients’ homes, sometimes even the same day. It ended up being a fun and unexpected service and we went the extra mile to overachieve for our clients,” says Harriet Guadagnuolo of **Blubird**.

With strict cleaning and social-distancing measures in place, it’s also key for customers to enjoy a luxurious experience when venturing out to shop. For Courtney Watkins, owner of **Mine & Yours**, limited store traffic means “treating it as a styling appointment for one-on-one customer service to maintain an exclusive feel.” Watkins also takes a fun approach to standard protective coverings: “We’ve made special designer-branded face masks—**Chanel, Gucci, Louis Vuitton** and more—and all customers will receive complimentary hand-painted red-nail gloves to take home. It’s a way of continuing our luxury branding and offering our customers an elevated shopping experience.”

“We continue to deliver exceptional service, but in a modified way,” Kornbluth agrees. “Our fashion experts have access to online tools to support virtual shopping including

**Zoom**-based wardrobing and fashion-consultation sessions.”

He adds that customer buying habits have also changed. More than ever, the focus is on quality over quantity: “When people do shop, they may make fewer trips but purchase more per visit. I think we will continue to see people valuing quality in products they choose to purchase, and making more discerning buying decisions.”

“People really care about their dollar and not wasting it. Quality purchases feel safe,” Watkins adds. Carey Hulshof, founder of **Secret Location**, agrees: “People will become more decisive in their purchasing habits.”

Guadagnuolo says, “There’s less traffic but, when people do come in, it’s intentional. With people spending more time at home there’s less need for formal wear. We’re focusing on luxury loungewear and athleisure that makes staying in feel special. Our products are changing with a new lifestyle.”

Hulshof notes that an increase in working from home will see more focus on “the portrait”—the part of you that your Zoom colleagues see. She predicts that this will translate into “a focus on skin care, beauty, tops and jewelry.”

Watkins believes her customers are making conscious decisions to get out of their sweats. “There’s less opportunity ... to dress up but they still want to wear special pieces. If people are going out, it’s an exciting opportunity to look their best.”

Hulshof playfully speaks to “revenge shopping,” referring to “those that are excited to get out, socialize, and are making up for lost time.”

# Hot Shops

VANCOUVER'S GREATEST AND LATEST RETAILERS  
BY NOA NICHOL



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contests

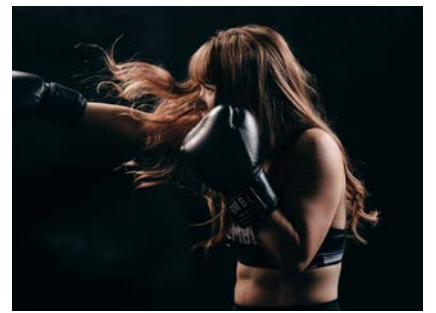
**TAKASA LIFESTYLE CO.**

We've found a new way to decorate, courtesy of Canada's first-ever manufacturer of Global Organic Textile Standard and Fairtrade Cotton-certified homewares, and our living spaces are loving it! **Takasa Lifestyle Company Inc.** has launched its Canadian website, providing ethical and sustainable bed and bath linens—plus beautiful things for baby, too—for Canucks. Committed to engaging in ethical manufacturing practices, Takasa works to improve the lives of everyone involved in the supply chain, including its farmer partners, who receive a fair and stable price for their cotton. Working with **Green Story**, Takasa has calculated the environmental impact of its entire supply chain, resulting in savings of thousands of litres of water, several-hundred kilos of CO<sub>2</sub> and thousands of hectares of farmland spared from harmful pesticides. As one example, Takasa's typical cotton bed sheet set (from \$239 and available in three shades and two cotton weaves) saves in excess of 3,000 litres of water—equivalent to more than 1,600 days of drinking water! As if that's not enough, Takasa has partnered with **One Tree Planted** to plant one tree for each order received. As for the products, they're a hit with celeb designers like **HGTV's** Karin Bennett, who says, "I tried the brand's bed linens and I have to say I am in love. Not only are these linens so soft, but they are also safe for my family." [Takasa.ca](http://Takasa.ca)



**GROVE SALON**

Just in time to help sort out our quarantine-hair woes, Chilliwack's **Grove Salon** has opened its second location, starring polished-concrete floors, lots of light and gorgeous wood-accented chairs, on Commercial Street (yes, the very same road that foodie-fave **Flourist** calls home). This independent female-run "healthy hair shop" is founded by sisters-in-law Bridgette Pysh and Jayme Smith—who together have more than three decades of experience in the beauty industry—plus their hair-stylist friend, Maria Hoggard. Designed to be a comfortable and homey space where customers can relax and let out their inner beauty, Grove uses, when at all possible, naturally derived if not certified-organic products—think **Kevin Murphy** colour and retail products as well as a selection of handpicked local lines like **K'pure Naturals**, **AG Hair** and **Liola Luxuries**. Services at the East Van salon include blow-outs, balayage, highlights, glossing, hair colour, root touchups, men's and women's cuts and several stylist add-ons like toner, fringe trim and creation, and deep-conditioning treatments. Although, in light of COVID-19, the shop will not initially not be offering walk-ins, appointments are currently available to book in advance via an online booking system. Plus, every guest will be provided with a fresh face mask for their visit and given hand sanitizer before entering. Healthy, from hair to toe! **3462 Commercial St., 604-558-2010. [Thegrovesalonspa.com](http://Thegrovesalonspa.com)**



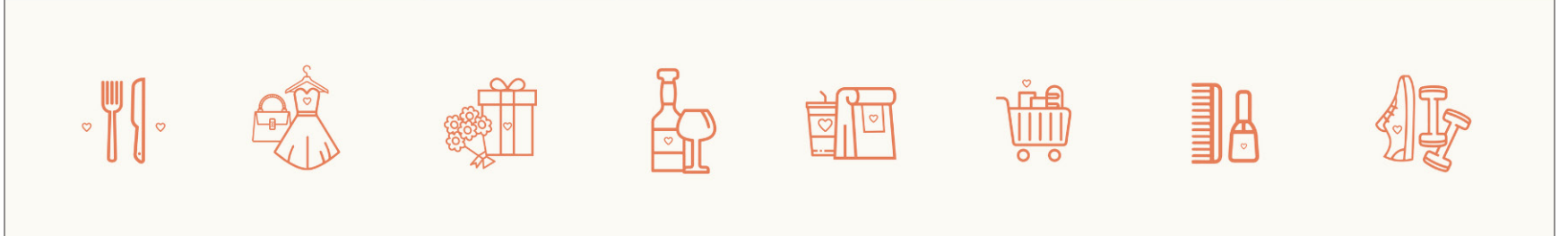
**RUMBLE BOXING STUDIO**

Are you ready to rumble? Vancouver's newest fitness concept, **Rumble Boxing Studio**, has opened inside Yaletown's ARC building, offering a fun, high-energy and badass boxing-style workout anyone can do (we promise) in a welcoming and sleek 5,800-square-foot studio. With a "Fight Club Meets Nightclub" vibe, Rumble mashes up cardio group fitness and heavy bag boxing for a high-intensity, 50-minute, boxer-body workout that doesn't pull any punches. It's lights down, music up, and then one of Rumble's highly skilled motivators will keep you on the beat with a series of hooks, jabs and crosses, combined with that all-important fancy footwork. Besides its signature heavy bag classes as well as a "Guts and Glory" bootcamp, personal training, small-group training, team building and Junior Tribe classes for kids are also available. Oh, and of course, all boxers are three-metres apart from one another to ensure a safe workout. **968 Expo Blvd., 604-336-6939. [Rumbleboxing.com](http://Rumbleboxing.com)**



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# Meghan Markle's Style Evolution

ALL EYES ARE ON THE MODERN WOMAN'S FAVOURITE FASHION STAR  
BY JEANINE GORDON

**F**

From actress to royalty to a newly independent life, no matter what role Meghan Markle takes on women everywhere clamour to copy her sophisticated and chic—yet seemingly effortless—style. Omar Nobil, vice-president of women's design at **Banana Republic**, calls Markle's mode of dressing "impeccable," adding that, "She's become a style icon, striking an incredible balance between modern classics and trends. We love how she continues to push the boundaries of style today."

For Harriet Guadagnuolo of Vancouver's **Blubird**, the former *Suits* actress "puts her own effortless, modern and comfortable twist on the traditions and classics. She always looks polished yet relaxed, and I think that's what many women are looking to achieve with their everyday style."

Now, without having to follow certain royal rules, Markle may be entering a new fashion phase.

"I believe she'll remain true to her



PHOTO: TIM ROOKE / SHUTTERSTOCK

“She’s become a style icon, striking an incredible balance between modern classics and trends”

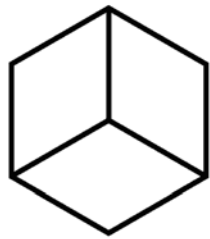
personal style and have even more fun with her everyday looks,” says Nobil, who sees her enjoying more freedom in this new chapter of her life. “I expect we’ll see more relaxed looks from day to day.”

Sara Ralph of **Bella & Wren** in Fort Langley, agrees. “I see Meghan’s style becoming more relaxed and casual as she moves away from the palace,” she says. For Guadagnuolo, Markle’s new off-duty role means “more denim, more knits, more boots. We may even see her holding a coffee and wearing yoga pants while she runs errands.”

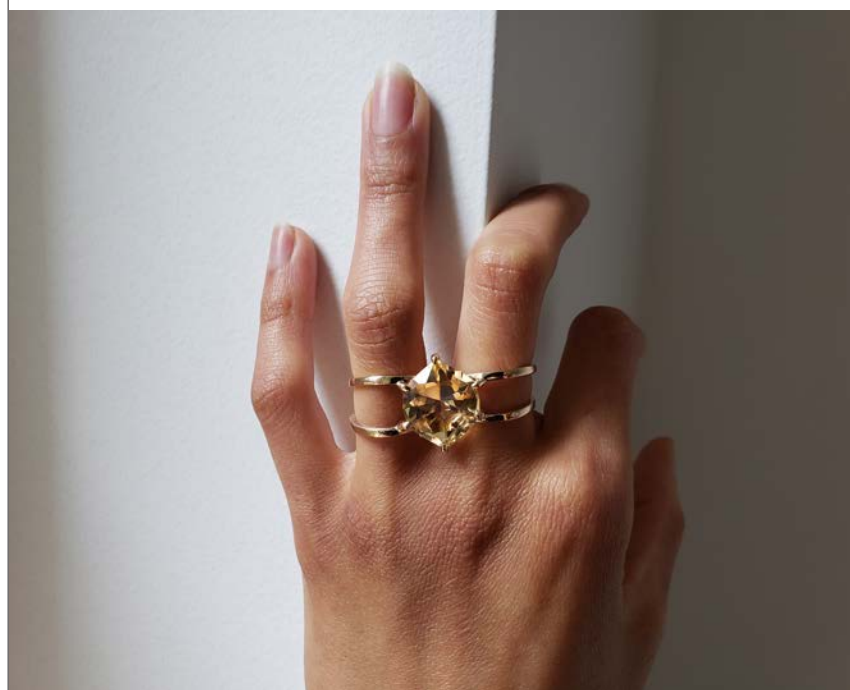
It’s precisely that relatability that so many women find appealing. “People appreciate her style because it’s not that difficult and we can recreate it within our own budget,” explains Vancouver stylist Michelle Addison. “She knows what works for her and has it clearly defined in everything she wears. She’s not afraid to dress for herself. It’s a more feminist approach to fashion that any woman can emulate—dressing for yourself and being yourself is something that looks great on any woman.”

“Meghan radiates confidence and knows her body well,” echoes Nobil. “People love Meghan’s style because it’s both accessible and effortless as she mixes high and low pieces together. No matter what the occasion, she remains true to herself.”

In terms of “getting the look,” for Addison “the rule ... is to get the basics, which give you instant outfits. Choose investment pieces that are your go-tos. Then, add colour and trends that work for you each season.” Whether, for Markle, those seasonal extras include a great pair of shorts, a sporty anorak, a printed jacket, a chic jumpsuit or a more-relaxed version of that now-famous Banana Republic trench dress, what we know for certain is that all eyes will be focused on her amazing, authentically Meghan style. ♡



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## Get the Look



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» Classic pumps  
» Boat-neck dresses and tops

**BANANA REPUBLIC**  
» Button-up shirt  
» Little black dress  
» Utility accents  
» Cinched-waist silhouettes

**BLUBIRD**  
» Ballerina flats  
» Pencil skirt  
» Striped tee  
» Trench coat



# Sportif Summer

THIS SEASON'S HOTTEST SANDAL  
TREND INCLUDES, YUP, VELCRO  
BY LYNDI BARRETT



**Sam Edelman's** Ashie (\$75 at **Nordstrom**) incorporates a second big summer trend—the printed scarf—to add a feminine touch to the traditionally utilitarian silhouette of the strapped sandal. The only issue: which pretty print to pick? **799 Robson St., 604-699-2100. Shop.nordstrom.com**

After spending most of spring in slippers, comfort and practicality are big factors affecting our summer footwear choices. Luckily, this year's streetstyle trend, the so-called sportif **Velcro** sandal, includes both (it is, essentially, the “dad sneaker” of the season). Emerging just in time for warmer weather in every colour variation and fabrication under the sun, even high-end design houses like **Prada**, **Dior** and **Gucci** have released their own version. From the utilitarian **Teva** to the luxe **Chanel** sportif sandal, we've rounded up our favourites for the season. ♡

The super-sporty Mala sandal by **Shoe the Bear** (\$136) features a chunky foam sole for extra comfort—and height. The leather upper comes in a variety of colours and is ideal for running (or bouncing!) around the city in style. **Shoethebear.com**



Playing on the '90s dad-shoe trend, you'll likely see **Chanel's** cord-and-lambskin sandal (\$1,350 at **Holt Renfrew**) all over your social-media feed this season, paired with everything from pretty dresses to sweatpants and socks. **737 Dunsmuir St., 604-673-8855. Chanel.ca**

When we think of **Velcro** sandals, **Teva** instantly comes to mind. The brand has become synonymous with making practical sandals—that are now super stylish, too. This sporty shoe (\$110) is made with a luxe leather upper and flatform sole, making it a great option for summer practicality (along with making a fashion statement). **Tevaonline.ca**

**Native's** Juliet Metallic sandal (\$65) has a grooved footbed that helps with traction, and a dual-density sole for a soft cushion to your every step. Made from an odour-resistant material, this pretty pair can be washed by hand after an outdoor summer adventure. **14 Water St., 604-800-8630. Nativeshoes.com**



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## SELFISH SWIMWEAR



SELFISH swimwear is an ethical and responsible swimwear brand that advocates body positivity.

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# New Noshes

WHERE AND WHAT TO EAT THIS MONTH



## UNO GELATO

Farm-to-cone gelateria **Uno Gelato** has, happily, reopened all three of its Vancouver locations just time for summer, with extra safety precautions, of course. Get scoops and pints of its famous freshly churned gelato and sorbetto in store; at its flagship Kitsilano location, you can also order Italian-inspired hot beverages like affogato (gelato and espresso) alongside shakes made with local **Avalon Dairy** organic milk. The Uno team has even created a new limited-supply gelato flavour, “Y’all Come Back” Salted Pecan, to celebrate its return. Featuring Texan pecans, wholesome organic milk and cream from the Fraser Valley, sea salt from Vancouver Island and a touch of organic cane sugar, this unique western blend will have you fixin’ to a scoop or two. Can’t make it to one of their shops? Order online and receive free delivery throughout most of Metro Vancouver. *New daily store hours are: Kitsilano (2579 W. Broadway, 604-733-5884) 1 p.m. to 10 p.m.; Vancouver Convention Centre (#30-1055 Canada Pl.), 1 p.m. to 9 p.m.; False Creek (601 Stamps Landing), 9 a.m. to 9 p.m.* NOA NICHOL

## UNCLE TETSU

It’s a standard sight at any **Uncle Tetsu** outpost, but the queue down the street is absolutely worth the wait for this heavenly Japanese cheesecake. The iconic-in-Japan bakery has opened its latest location on Robson Street, boasting signature cheesecakes that are softer, lighter and contain less sugar than their Western counterparts thanks to a top-secret recipe that includes only the freshest ingredients baked daily in small batches by hand. We, admittedly, picked up several of these cakes to savour, plus a couple of its other offerings (triple-baked cheese tarts and luscious honey madeleines) for, you know, good measure. *1151 Robson St., 416-591-0555. [Uncletetsu-ca.com](http://Uncletetsu-ca.com)* NOA NICHOL



## DO CHAY

The joyful expression Double Happiness now applies to **Do Chay**—and we’re not just talking about second helpings. The plant-based Vietnamese eatery has opened a location number 2 in its sister restaurant **House Special’s** Yaletown location. Among the fun and inventive plant-based dishes, order the fan-favourite coconut rice cakes, vegan avocado pho, XO potstickers and turmeric banh xeo crepe (consider doubling up on each). *1269 Hamilton St. [Dochay.ca](http://Dochay.ca)* NOA NICHOL

CONTINUED ON PAGE 15



Rich Ghanaian prints and hand-painted clouds combined with upcycled clothing express an ever-dynamic creativity that is Sleepless Mindz. The brand’s motto:

*“Let’s dream with our eyes open.”*

SLEEPLESSMINDZ.COM  
@SLEEPLESSMINDZ

## Khimia Designs



**Khimia (keem-yah) is the Lingala word for peace in founder Victoire’s Indigenous language.**

Her love for fashion derived from her African heritage; African print is simply not a trend but one that has been trendy for many generations across Africa.

Khimia Designs makes fashion easy by letting the vibrant and bold prints in our collections do the talking, while our customers stay in style, always!

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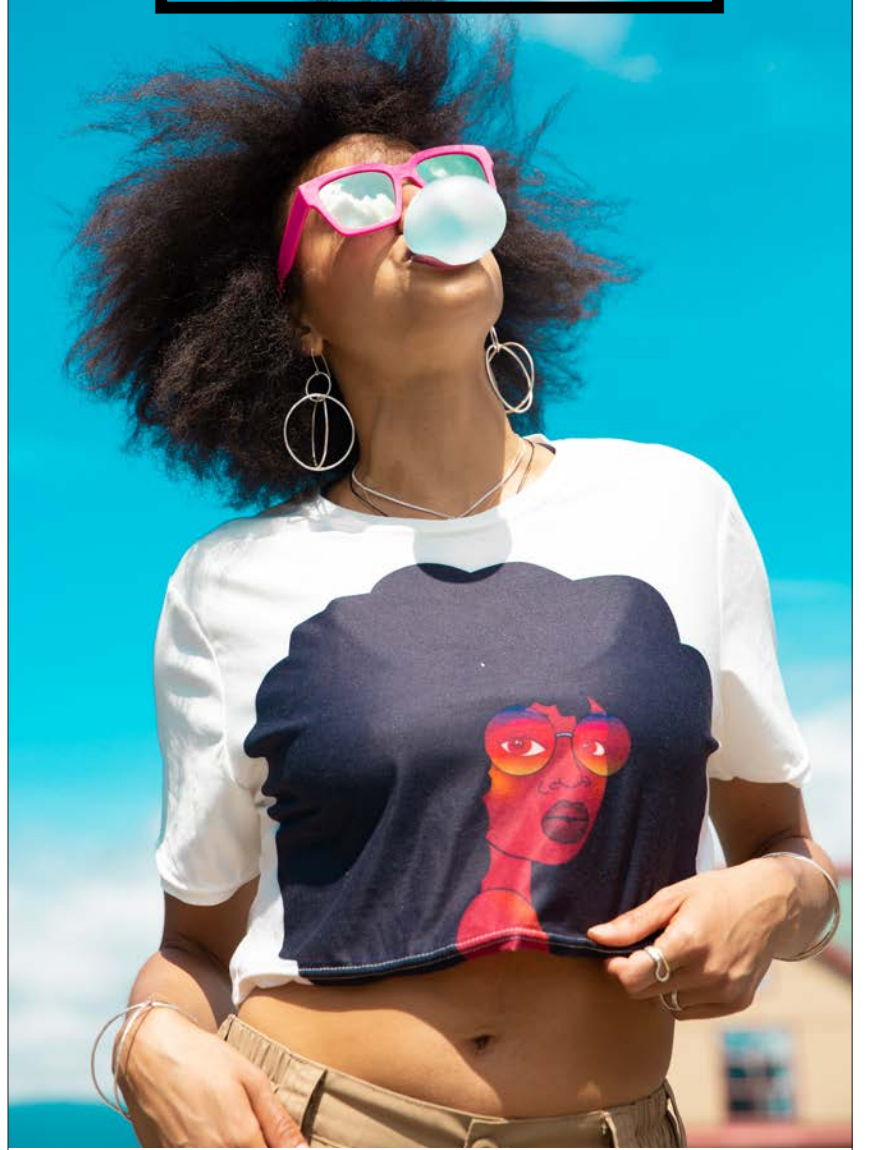


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**KURENT Designs is the brainchild of entrepreneur and photographer Sandra-Joy Unaegbu.**

Her vision for the brand is inspired by her love of photography and travel, and her Nigerian roots. She hopes to share her passion with customers all over the world.

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The word Karibu means "welcome" in Swahili, the native language in Kenya, where founders Kennedy and Jemeli were born and raised before moving to Canada less than a decade ago.

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# Beauty BOSS

BASED IN VANCOUVER AND FOUNDED BY OYÉTA KOKOROKO, OKOKO COSMÉTIQUES IS INNOVATING THE SKIN-CARE ARENA WITH NATURAL PRODUCTS DESIGNED TO MAKE BEAUTIFUL SKIN A REALITY BY SUPPORTING THE FIVE VITAL FUNCTIONS OF A HEALTHY, YOUTHFUL COMPLEXION: MOISTURE, NUTRITION, PROTECTION, RENEWAL AND RADIANCE

BY NOA NICHOL

**Hello Oyéta! Please tell us a bit about yourself to start.**

Before I got into the beauty business I was enrolled in a naturopathic program in Montreal to deal with some personal health and skin problems. By embracing a balanced diet and overhauling my personal-care products I was able to improve my health and my skin, and I decided to pursue my passion by taking classes on naturopathic medicine and completing a diploma in cosmetic science and skin-care formulation. I've been formulating skin care for almost a decade and launched **Okoko Cosmétiques** in 2016. With hard work, determination and drive, I built and grew a business that became internationally recognized and won multiple awards. I want to make a positive impact, empower other entrepreneurs and give back.

**What motivated you to launch Okoko Cosmétiques, and what continues to inspire you?**

I have always dreamed of becoming an entrepreneur, live my passion and make an impact with my business. I founded Okoko with the desire to provide a line of high-performance products that are results-focused and address common skin concerns like problematic skin, dark spots, uneven skin tone, etc. Products that would be 100 per cent natural yet effective



PHOTOS: ERICH SAIDE



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and safe for the skin while also being environmentally friendly, luxurious and cruelty free. With Okoko, I was motivated to deliver the ultimate products that would provide efficacy, results and performance in dreamy formulas that would be a joy to use. Mission accomplished!

**What makes Okoko different from other skin-care lines?**

One of the first thing that sets us apart is our innovative formulations and the quality of our products. We research, develop, create and make our products from scratch using certified-organic ingredients combined with evidence-based, high-performance botanicals that are backed by academic research to deliver powerful results. A lot of natural skin-care products are often basic and not as exciting to use. While doing market research for Okoko, I recognized a need in the green-beauty industry for more diversity and more innovation in the products available. We still don't see as much innovation in the green-beauty industry, or truly luxurious (yet still 100 per cent natural) formulations that are results focused and offer great performance as we see in the mainstream world. This is what we provide at Okoko and it is why our customers are so supportive of our brand and product launches. They know that Okoko offers quality, innovation, performance, results and a luxurious experience all in one. It is very hard to achieve and combine all of the above in our skin care, but we have managed to do it. I guess that we love challenges, and it shows in our range. This is what makes Okoko products so special: they are made with love and care!



**What are some of Okoko's bestsellers, and why?**

Our Sublime balm is one of our bestsellers. It is a multi-purpose balm with a gorgeous orange colour derived from tomato-seed oil, carrot oil and sea buckthorn oil, which are very powerful antioxidants. What's amazing about Sublime is that it's truly a multi-tasking product that appeals to a minimalistic consumer by offering the benefits of several products all in one product. Another bestseller is L'Élixir de Pureté, Sang du Dragon, also known as Okoko Dragon's Blood serum. It's formulated



# BEAUTY & BITES

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with a red-coloured sap extracted from trees nicknamed “Dragoniers” and found in South America.

Dragon’s Blood extract is known to aid in reducing the appearance of redness and irritation, fighting the look of wrinkles and fine lines, and protecting against pollutants and environmental stressors. Additionally, our newly launched cleanser Beauté Majestique is an all-in-one cleanser, makeup remover, exfoliator and mask. The beautiful advantage of this formulation is that it combines four products in one! It has the ability to gently cleanse the skin and remove surface impurities while effectively exfoliating dead skin cells, and it can be used as a moisturizing mask as well. Beauté Majestique is quickly becoming popular because of its versatility but also its gorgeous texture and red colour that remind us of strawberry jam (the scent is delicious; it smells like strawberry vanilla!). Overall, Beauté Majestique is an amazing multi-purpose product that offers benefits for all skin types and can be used daily.



feel that it is essential to allow healing, growth and progress. We need to listen, we need to be open about this and willing to learn; we need to make space for healing to happen and only then will there be progress. Because I know what it feels like to not be given the same opportunity as others (because of your skin colour, race, religion, etc.), I have decided to set an example by promoting inclusivity and diversity inside my company. My team is multi-racial and this is something that I am proud of. Being a Black-owned business in the luxury green-beauty market is rare because there are very few of us at the moment. So being one of them is powerful stuff. It motivates me to continue to be dedicated and forge a path for other Black entrepreneurs and people of colour who wish to succeed in a desired sector. I’m doing this for those who want to see more diversity, more examples to follow. If the impact of my journey inspires people to turn their “I can’t” to “I can,” and if I can set an example for other women of colour, I feel that I would have done my part and achieved my mission.

## Any new launches coming up for summer?

Yes! We’re launching our luxurious new collection boxes. Customers will be able to stock their Okoko products in these red-and-gold or white-and-gold boxes. We’re also excited to move into our new workshop and storefront, **L’Atelier Okoko**, which will be located in Gastown. What I envisioned for this new space is to turn it into a green-beauty hub where customers will be able to receive private consultations, purchase Okoko products and discover complimentary wellness and beauty brands. We hope to be open by fall!



## How does Okoko empower, support and celebrate women?

Giving back to the community is a huge part of our purpose, but it’s also what we do with the profits—I think that consumers are more interested in brands that have a social impact. To that end, some of our team members volunteer with **Beauty Night Society**, which empowers women

and youth living in poverty and treats them to a night of beauty and pampering. We also make donations to the **Joy Smith Foundation**, which helps victims of human trafficking, as well as regular food and toiletry donations to **Bridge Housing for Women** in Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside. This is what we call the new kind of luxury—that is, luxury shouldn’t be reserved for only a few but, rather, everyone can enjoy a bit of luxury and self-care in their lives. We also celebrate our own Okoko team of multicultural women, who have inspiring stories and are working together to build a meaningful product line and brand.

## In light of the current global focus on anti-racism, people of colour and racial equality for all, where does Okoko stand and how does it contribute to the collective movement/conversation?

I am very sad and disappointed to see that we still have to go through these experiences in 2020. The truth is that people of colour are still going through troubling experiences and racial inequality still exists everywhere. I feel that we have a lot to do still to improve things. The first step to reconciliation is to recognize that racism is still alive and to speak about the issue openly. I know a lot of people would rather avoid discussing it, but I

## If you were stuck on a desert island and could only take one Okoko product with you, what would it be?

I absolutely love the scent as well as the milky texture of La Perle serum-mist, plus the fact that it is loaded with powerhouse antioxidants that shield against environmental damage—resveratrol, bakuchiol, lycopene and coenzyme Q10. These join forces to achieve powerful protection. This would definitely be the product you would want to have with you when you are stuck on a desert island! **Okokocosmetiques.com**



kaliworks.com



Kali is a Pan-African brand specializing in Afro-Focused statement pieces. This Baharia shirt is part of the MSAFIRI Collection. MSAFIRI is swahili for "traveller". The Baharia blues represent the maritime traveller, the sailor.

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# Salons Restyled

CLOSED IN MARCH, B.C. BEAUTY SERVICES WERE PERMITTED TO REOPEN IN MID MAY. HOW ARE THEY ADJUSTING TO THE NEW NORMAL?  
BY AILEEN LALOR



**T**

The COVID-19 shutdown period for businesses around the world has been devastating, but beauty services have been particularly hard hit. There's no home delivery or curbside pickup for those who cut your hair, do your nails or style your brows, and most salons tend to be small ones owned by women. Business owners breathed a sigh of relief when it was announced in May that they'd be able to reopen—but there was no small amount of trepidation, as the new beauty landscape would be very different to the old one.

Guidance was provided by the B.C. government to help businesses develop policies, guidelines and procedures. Beauty pros have different ways of communicating these to clients—online, through social media and by email—and it's essential to read them before a visit, as all salons will have a different policy based on their unique businesses.

Brands reached out with additional training and guidance, such as skin-care specialist **Dermalogica**, which developed Clean Touch Certification, covering PPE and enhanced

sanitation. Beauty providers are happy to do whatever it takes to safeguard people. "I think if people want to maintain relationships with their clients they will do everything they can to ensure they've covered all their bases," says Kathryn Sawers, owner of **Collective Skin Care**.

Some sanitation practices are things one would expect all the time: handwashing between clients, cleaning and disinfection of tools. But there has been a need to step things up.

"I don't want people just to think I moved the furniture around," says Shai, owner of downtown's **Pome Studio**. "I've always been a one-chair salon with a hand sink by the door, but I've put a lot of thought into how I've adapted my space to meet the ... requirements. I replaced surfaces that wouldn't be able to withstand frequent sanitation and confirmed that the vent coming into the salon is delivering fresh air, not re-circulated, for example. Some of this is invisible work. I posted details on my website because I don't personally find it helpful when businesses just say they're being more sanitary. I wonder what that means."

Shaughnessy Otsuji, microblader/nipple tattooist and co-founder of Langley's **Studio Sashiko**, agrees: "We're sanitizing the debit terminal, till area and other high-use areas after each customer—that's not something we were doing before."

There was an initial loss of income due to closure, and this has been compounded by unexpected outlay. There's new equipment—PPE, barriers, disposable bedding for services like facials and massages,



PHOTO: JESS MEIGHAN

“I’m wearing a face shield, which is pressing against my forehead, and it’s curved, there’s glare, there’s blind spots. It’s challenging to be relearning so much”

and even larger garbage bins to accommodate more paper towels. Beauty businesses have to allow more time between clients for heightened sanitation, which means they can see fewer people in a day.

"We're not able to operate at 100 per cent capacity as we previously were, so that limits the number of clients we are able to see, and because tables have to be staggered for social distancing, we can't have our full staff working," says Linh Khuu, owner of Yaletown's **Varnish Nail Lounge**.

Doing your job while wearing PPE all day is difficult. Because Otsuji is a tattooist, she has to wear an even more extreme version of it. "We had N95 masks donated to us and are wearing them, but they're really fitted so I have these red marks and dents, and I'm wearing plastic sleeves over my forearms, which is so sweaty. I'm wearing a face shield, which is pressing against my forehead, and it's curved, there's glare, there's blind spots. It's challenging to be relearning so much."

Some of the familiarity is lost when the client and service provider are wearing PPE. Things are almost the same, but very different. Otsuji says clients are taken aback to see her dressed up like something out of *Breaking Bad*—and the sense of creative collaboration is different with masks in the way. Shai is doing phone and video consults instead of her usual pre-appointment conversation, but it's not the same if you can't see a client's whole face in real time.

"When I cut hair I can see people's expressions and figure out more about what people want for their hair—expressions give me a signal about whether to do more or less," says Shai. "Now, I see nothing but the mask. The joy we get from our jobs is from the smiles on people's faces."

Too has the luxury feel we associate with beauty appointments changed—no more plush duvets at your facial or cups of coffee. "Most people are not expecting pampering—they want in and out as fast as possible," Shai says. "But ... there are still moments of connection. For me, after the excitement of catching up, it's all about listening to music together."

There are more silver linings. Some service providers have come up

with creative solutions to integrate technology in this brave new world. Sawers was doing online consults with clients during her shutdown and has relished the opportunity to maintain relationships virtually: "This whole experience has shown us there are a lot of ways we can stay connected virtually and I wouldn't see that going away."

Sharon Ebid of **iLash Boutique** points out that, in a world where everyone is wearing masks, the eyes may be the big focus—a potential boon for her as a lash specialist. "Full, long lashes can open up your eyes and make you look more alert. Lashes can brighten someone's face and mood, which is something we need during these times," she says.

Clients are generally happy to be back and receiving their usual treatments and services. "They seem at ease and happy to be able to get back to familiar routines that make them feel good," says Sawers. But a few weeks into reopening, things are most definitely not back to normal. Always, there's the threat of another provincewide shutdown should COVID-19 numbers begin to climb again and, while people have the perception that salons are busy, it's not necessarily the case.

"It's definitely been different; getting back, you have this huge rush of clients wanting to come in, but also realize that others have decided they don't need the service for now or can't afford it due to the circumstances," says Ebid. "They are new challenges that we business owners need to face, and it will take a lot more time to feel anywhere close to normal again."

"After the first influx of clients things have been quiet, partly because people have continued to work from home and partly because some clients aren't yet comfortable to come to the salon," adds Shai. "I understand that people have different comfort levels and aren't ready yet, but we've been told we're all in this together. The clients that have come were excited to be back—but they were also aware of precautions and they thanked me for keeping them safe. Even Dr. Bonnie Henry, who signed off on us reopening, has gone into a salon to get her hair done." ❖



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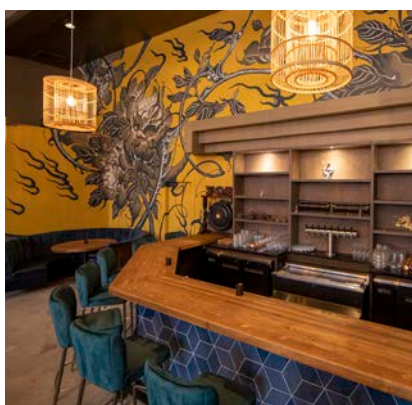
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# BEAUTY & BITES

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10



## COLD TEA

If you're an OG Vancouver partygoer you'll remember **Tsui Hang Village**, anchored at the corner of Davie and Granville streets for more than three decades. Notoriously known for its "cold tea"—beer served in teapots after alcohol service ended—the infamous restaurant shut its doors late last year, making way for a new establishment, aptly named **Cold Tea** (though no alcohol will be served after hours this time around). Owners Ron Cheng and Paul Rivas, with head chef Thien Vuong, have combined their Chinese, Spanish and Vietnamese food experiences to create "new-wave dim-sum" and tapas-style Chinese-Vietnamese dishes. Start with vegan potstickers filled with kabocha squash, coconut cream and lemongrass, oh-so refreshing green papaya salad served with tofu and Mr. T's sweet-and-salty wings (perfectly coated with the chef's secret sauce) before moving on to bigger plates like Lai Fun carbonara (thick and slippery Cantonese rice noodles with bacon, cream sauce and a sous-vide egg) or roast pork belly on rice (yes, it's got that crackling pork skin!). Finish with a Vietnamese-style coffee brûlée or chocolate-dipped Chinese donut. And don't forget to ask your server for a pot of "cold tea"—a secret beer cocktail served in a teapot—to go with the sweets! **1193 Granville St., 604-423-2653. Coldtearestaurant.com** LOUISA CHAN

## ¿CÓMO? CHICO

Things may look a bit different now that **¿CÓMO? Taperia** has reopened its doors post-pandemic, but the team is staying true to its roots as an authentic destination for all things Spain. **¿CÓMO? Chico** is a temporary tapas, shop and drink pop-up in Mount Pleasant (just off Main) offering prepared small bites (bocadillos, cold octopus salad, boquerones and olives), tinned conservas, light and crushable wines and sangria on tap, plus a mercado (that's market en español) where sipping and shopping is allowed (now that's a grocery-getting experience we're down for). Pick up premium Spanish olive oil, piquillo peppers from Navarra and Spanish rice. Rumour has it the team is also working on a merchandise line, which already includes the muy popular Como tote bag, which boasts slots for wine bottles, cheese and more (so, the perfect park-hang companion). ¡Que bueno! **201 E. 7th Ave., 604-879-3100. Comotaperia.com**



## LUNCH LADY

If it's good enough for Anthony, it's good enough for us! **Lunch Lady**, Bourdain's beloved Vietnam go-to street-food stall, has opened its first-ever North American outpost on Commercial Drive. Powered by mother-and-son duo Victoria and Michael Tran of **Five Elements Cafe** and **Pacific Poke** alongside and chef Ben Lim, Lunch Lady Vancouver, via a partnership with the notorious Mrs. Nguyen, offers the same classic daily noodle rotations (bún bò huế, bún thái, bánh canh cua and more) that are famously served at the original Hồ Chí Minh City location. **1046 Commercial Dr., 604-559-5938. Thelunchlady.com** NOA NICHOL



## CHICKADEE

A sip-worthy new pop-up has reintroduced formerly quarantined cocktail fans to fun nights out and an array of reduced-contact "choose-your-own-cocktail" experiences. **Chickadee**, taking space at **Juke Fried Chicken**, lets small parties of guests customize and order from an array of handcrafted signature and classic cocktails using an online platform and downloadable app. Choose your preferred spirit family and brand from more than 50 labels, or opt for "dealer's choice" drinks that can be tailored to suit your preferred style (neat, rocks, short, stirred) and flavour profile (citrus, bitter, sour, smoky). May we suggest a shaken-up Golden Sunset (**Flor de Caña** five-year rum, turmeric coconut cream, pineapple juice, lime juice) or stirred-down Globetrotter (**Wild Turkey** bourbon, **Green Chartreuse**, charred pineapple, galangal, lime bitters, **Ardbeg** rinse)? Hungry? Juke's southern-fried grub can be grabbed from its takeout counter located in the adjacent space. **182 Keefer St., 604-336-5853. Barchickadee.com** NOA NICHOL

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# Oil Well

IF YOU'RE FINDING IT HARD TO SLEEP OR FOCUS AT THE MOMENT, ESSENTIAL OILS MIGHT HELP. HERE, TIPS FROM THE EXPERTS ON WHAT TO USE AND HOW  
BY AILEEN LALOR



You can call it the new normal if you like, but there's nothing normal about the way we're living right now, and it's affecting us in myriad ways. Whether we can't drop off, have incredible and disturbing dreams, are unable to finish a train of thought or are bursting into tears at cute animals on **Twitter**, our moods are all out of kilter. We can't change much about the way we live right now; worry and stress will be part of our lives for some time to come. But we can change how we respond to it, by incorporating self-care practices like meditation, yoga and aromatherapy.

Essential oils have been used for thousands of years to help people adjust their mood, and there's some science behind the idea that oils like lavender can relax you. It also makes intuitive sense that the fragrance of mint should be refreshing, or a citrus scent can revive you. The best way to scent a space is using an ultrasonic diffuser—there's no open flame to worry about like with a candle, and they can scent larger spaces better than reed diffusers, which, says Sara Pantan, CEO of **Vitruvi**, typically use synthetic fragrance rather than pure



PHOTO: BRITNEY GILL

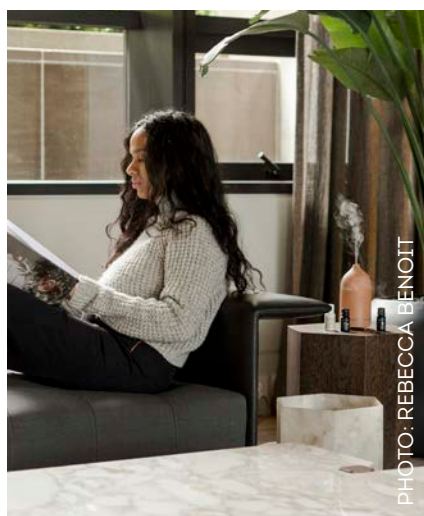


PHOTO: REBECCA BENOIT



PHOTO: REBECCA BENOIT

essential oils. Decades ago, diffusers were ugly and purely functional, but brands like **Saje Wellness**, **Muji** and **Vitruvi** have injected style into the designs, so they're now an attractive home-décor piece.

"The problem nowadays is choosing your oil if you're no longer able to wander past Saje or **Escentis** for a whiff. My best advice is to read thoroughly about the product online. There are often great descriptors that let you know how you can expect the product to smell and how it will feel. For example, is it floral, woody or citrusy?" says Saje national educator Kristin Rondeau. "I recommend reading through some of the customer reviews. Real people giving their real feedback on how a product felt, smelled or worked for them is a great testament to what you can expect from your purchase."

And it can be as simple, says Pantan, as thinking about what you like. "If you love the scent of basil and peppermint, you're likely someone who enjoys herbal aromas. If peeling an orange or lemon water make you happy, then citrus might be your scent choice. Start with choosing between floral, herbal, citrus and woody, then look for blends or essential oils that fit those categories."

People claim all sorts of benefits for essential oils but, of course, the ones most of us are interested in right now are relaxation and concentration. Karyne Sauriol of **Lotus Aroma's** marketing team says that lavender is an obvious choice for calming, but there are other options, too. "Exotic basil, mandarin and East Indian lemongrass are recognized to help relieve stress and improve focus," she says. "Other options can be frankincense [it regulates the nervous system], spearmint [calms and relieves headaches] and ylang ylang [calms, and is a known aphrodisiac]."

You can buy essential oils ready blended—Saje's Tranquility blend has lavender with roman chamomile and marjoram, while its Brainstorm has citrus, spice and floral notes to perk you up. Alternatively, it's easy to start experimenting with your own. Sauriol says it's best to start with a few drops of just two or three essential oils, which makes it easier to figure out what you like. Pantan is such an essential-oil expert that she wrote a book about it, *Essential Well Being*. Her next-level tip is to combine scent variations. "Citrus and herbal essential oils, and floral and woody essential oils, tend to pair nicely," she says. Think lemon and basil, or sandalwood and rose.

Ultimately, though, it's not what oils you choose or how you blend them, but the process; we're all spending more time at home than ever, and feeling more stressed than usual, so let's turn our spaces into self-care spaces. By the end of this pandemic, we might have developed better ways of relaxing to take into our daily lives—and who doesn't need that? ♡



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*City Scents*  
BY NOA NICHOL



Local co. **AromaTech** creates design-forward futuristic scent machines that use nebulizing technology to diffuse natural, pure aroma oil without diluting the quality or intensity of the fragrance over time or in larger spaces. It also makes custom scent creations for brands like **BMW**, **Apple**, **The Four Seasons** and **Harley Davidson**, and offers a "city collection" of oil blends (we're partial to the Vancouver edition, from \$76, with notes of juniper, pine, cedar, ocean water and sea salt) to help you get a whiff of your favourite travel destination without boarding an airplane (for now). [Aromatechscent.com](http://Aromatechscent.com)



# DÉCOR & DRINKS

## Rewriting Wine

BLACK WINEMAKERS MATTER  
BY LAURA STARR

# W

Wine as an industry has a reputation for being very slow to catch up to speed on issues of race and gender; in fact, wine is disproportionately controlled by white men, whether it's those who own wineries, make the wine or simply drive the narrative of what wine is and how it should be enjoyed (just scroll the Instagram feed of any commercial winery and you will see a sea of white).

The Black Lives Matter movement has brought to light a growing list of Black-owned wineries and makers, which has really given us a hefty mouthful to chew on: why didn't we know about these before June 2020 and why aren't they in the B.C. market? Is there even a Black-owned winery in Canada and, since the answer is yes, can you name it?

In short, systematic racism is why Black-owned businesses in the world of wine face barriers that make it intrinsically harder to operate with success—this can look like fewer mentors for young Black people interested in wine (paired with little to no representation of Black wine pros in wine media), fewer restaurants willing to hire Black sommeliers or wine directors (or train them up) or banks denying loans to Black people



trying to start up a business. The list goes on, and it goes deep; it is a historic problem that white people will never truly be able to understand, since it is not their lived experience.

It is no longer acceptable to stare at the liquor-store shelf and take at face value the representation presented to us as consumers. Question this wall of wine! Why were these bottles chosen, and where are the Black-owned (or other BIPOC) wines? Because they do

exist, and they are worth supporting and enjoying.

Though only one of these Black-owned wineries' products is available in B.C., all are worth supporting in other ways until they start to show on our shelves. Follow them on social media, inquire about them when you are in stores and restaurants and add them to your list of wineries to visit once this world safely allows us to cross borders again. 🇨🇦

### ABBHEY CREEK VINEYARD

Bertony Faustin is recognized as the first Black winemaker in Oregon. The industry did not welcome him with open arms, but he pushed for systemic growth and change and paved a path for other Black winemakers. [@abbeycreekwine](#)

### MAISON NOIR WINES

A garage winery founded by sommelier André Hueston Mack—the first African American to win America's Best Young Sommelier. [@andrehmack](#)

### MCBRIDE SISTERS

Sisters Robin and Andréa McBride were separated at birth and raised on different continents—hence the California and New Zealand wines they produce. They're known for their Black Girl Magic line of wines, as well as She-Can! canned wines that raise funds to support women in the industry. [@mcbridesisters](#)

### NYARAI CELLARS

A winery based in Niagara, Ontario, co-founded by winemaker Steve Byfield, who has earned some serious stripes in the industry. Canadians: You can buy this wine winery-direct! [@nyarai cellars](#)

### SEASIDE PEARL FARMGATE WINERY

This Mt. Lehman winery, tucked into B.C.'s Fraser Valley wine region, boasts a tasting room situated inside a chapel. That's where you'll find co-owner Allison Zimmerman flexing her hospitality skills with guests and brimming with excitement over Seaside's wines (which you can buy winery direct). [@seasidepearl\\_winery](#)

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