



[left] Alexander's Spa and Salon attracts clients from all over Boston and beyond.

[opposite] Nail services make up about 50% of the spa's business.

A Tale of Keeping Beauty

Maria Lekkakos opens up her new Alexander's Spa & Salon in dreamy Wenham, Mass. There, the pageant princess uses her Yankee (and Greek) ingenuity to make Alexander's a getaway fit for a queen.

BY JAYNA RUST

ONCE UPON A TIME IN A LAND FAR, FAR AWAY: Steve and Alexandra Lekkakos decided to leave their home country of Greece. They moved to the enchanted land of Massachusetts where they launched a pizza business and raised their three charming children.

The middle child, fair and beautiful Maria, dreamt of helping the paupers of prettiness (and those who just wanted to feel prettier or healthier) and fantasized about owning her own salon and spa. "Since I was a little girl, I've always been interested in the beauty business," says Maria.

AND SOON... Time wore on, and without the interventions of any witches or evil stepmothers, Maria's dream came true.

Through a proper education, she was taught the ways of beauty. Studying medical/spa esthetics at the Catherine Hinds Institute of Esthetics and nail art at the Blaine Hair School, Maria completed her formal trade education at the early age of 19.

But her education didn't stop there. She knew the wisdom of lands far and wide would help her create the spa and services she sought to make in Massachusetts. "I've been in Greece. I've studied in Italy. I studied for an exclusive line in Milan. In Europe, I got my international license as an esthetician," says the now 27-year-old Maria.



Salon Name: Alexander's Spa and Salon

Location: Wenham, Mass.

Owner: Maria Lekkakos

Square Footage: 1,100

Years of Ownership: old location

four years, new location one year

of Nail Techs/Employees: 2/8

Specialties: ultrasound facial, Roman Vichy shower room

Other Services: spa manicures and pedicures, body treatments, massages, makeup application, laser hair removal, botox, and other med-spa treatments as well as salon services

A KINGDOM AND A CROWN: After traveling near and far, she began working furiously on her childhood dream. In the land of Hamilton, Mass., she opened Alexander's Day Spa in a gym known as the Fitness Firm.

Here, at this one-room spa, she began putting her previous education to work. Although she had finally opened her own spa, she had dreams for something bigger and better—for herself and her new kingdom.

Fair Maria wanted to grow her business and be a Hollywood and celebrity stylist, but she knew she needed a way



Hot-stone massage is one of the services available at Alexander's Spa & Salon.

pedicures (\$45) make up around 50% of Alexander's services.

Other popular services include the med-spa services, which are completed by the spa's medical doctor. The current doctor approached Maria after she had become known far and wide. "It was kind of fun to be in the public eye and get into that segment of the industry," says Maria of the invitation.

PRINCE CHARMING(S) AND HAPPY ENDINGS: Thinking of the future, Maria still hopes to be swept away by the Hollywood life. "Entering the pageant was a great way to break in behind the scenes of the entertainment business," she says. "It opened up a lot of doors for me."

Those magical doors, closed to the masses, began flying open and beckoning Maria to step in. Through one door was a meeting with Miss New York USA 2004, Jaelyn Nesheiwat. The New York representative later went on to marry pop prince Scott Stapp (formerly of Creed), and Maria was cordially invited to style the high-profile wedding. Other doors revealed opportunities such as doing the makeup for magazine cover shoots.

And although it is her personal dream to work in the entertainment industry, she also has plans for expanding her spa kingdom.

Currently the guests coming to Alexander's include not only Boston-area's maidens, but its suitors as well. "Our male clientele has definitely grown through the years," Maria says. "It is very important that males take care of themselves, and it's beginning to show." She says these handsome men, who make up nearly 50% of the spa's clients, often get nail services, facials, or full spa days.

"I would love to open an Alexander's Men's Spa and retail boutique store," she says. "I think there is nothing around here for men, and it would be great to be the first."

And so, this pageant princess keeps dreaming of her future. But with her know-how and knack for pulling off plans, there's a good chance Maria Lekkakos and Alexander's will live happily ever after. ■

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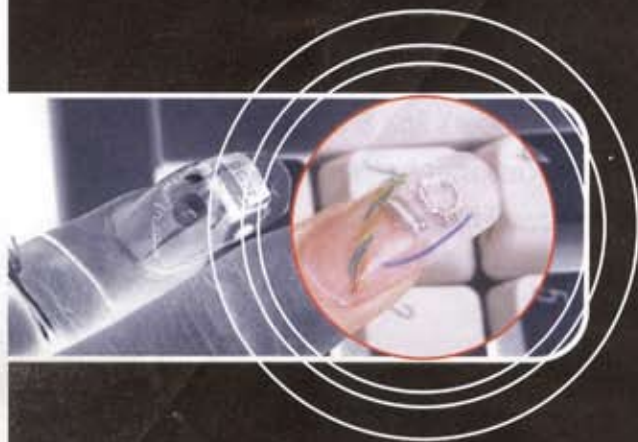


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Alexander's only offers natural nail services.

into the secret world. She decided to enter a pageant. The Miss USA competition proved to be her knight in shining armor. And like many princesses often do, Maria went on to become a queen. In 2004, she was crowned Miss Massachusetts USA.

Using her good fortune, Maria took advantage of all the opportunities she could. And just as she had hoped, the Miss Massachusetts title brought clients and credibility to her salon. "People take a second look at my ideas and my profile," she says. Indeed, nearly every story written about Alexander's or Maria mentions her beauty-pageant title.

But the buglers and the press keep announcing her win for a reason: a beauty queen has an instant credibility the general population can rarely ever experience. Readers realize this, and clients relish it. "My clients are so proud of me," says Maria. "They look up to me for makeup tips and beauty tips."

A EUROPEAN CASTLE: These clients come from lands near and far in hopes that fair Maria will take their hand (for a manicure of course). They visit her in her new seven-room spa, now known as Alexander's Spa & Salon. Near the Myopia Hunt Club and Pride's Crossing, Alexander's regal two-story building, which houses the spa downstairs and an apartment upstairs, attracts passersby in Boston's North Shore neighborhood. "The spa has a decor inspired by the French, Greek, and Italian," says Maria.

Once inside the spa, clients are tempted with the best pampering in every room. "Business has been great," says Maria. "We serve our clientele with the finest high-end beauty products."

When clients are pulled away — back to the dark and stressful world — they often take a little bit of luxury with them. "We carry a lot of high-end retail products, and our gross in retail varies from 60%-70%," Maria says.

Maria credits these miraculous numbers to being an all-knowing beauty queen, enriched by her days in Europe. "We've been successful because of my product knowledge," she says. "We make the clients understand what they're buying."

TREATED LIKE ROYALTY: Nail services are some of the spa's most-requested. The natural spa-style manicures (\$20) and