

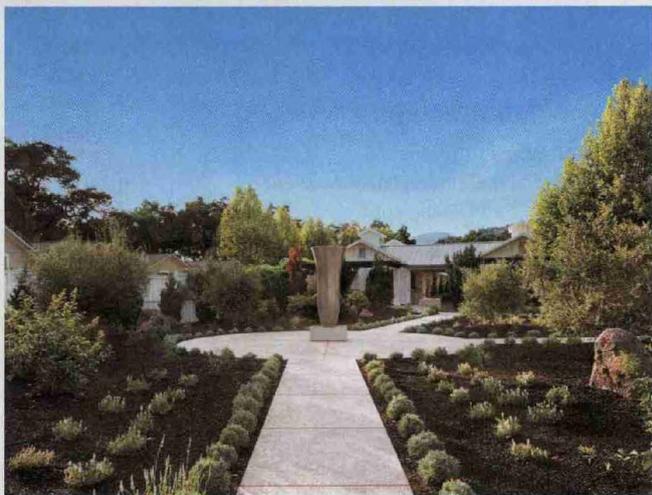
# Bathing Beauty

A popular Calistoga spa raises the bar with an all-encompassing makeover and a host of innovative offerings.



WHILE SPA SOLAGE AT **SOLAGE CALISTOGA**

(CA) has always been an enticing retreat, it has become even more attractive to spa-goers thanks to a recent multimillion-dollar renovation. The update to the 14-treatment-room spa involved a 2,500-square-foot expansion to the reception building and included a new indoor and outdoor Relaxation Lounge, expanded men's and women's locker rooms with outdoor showers, an enhanced menu of services and fitness programs, and a re-design of the spa's interior decor. The spa also benefits from a new garden, which highlights local herbs such as California white sage, lavender, mint, and rosemary. Each is incorporated into the spa's many offerings, which spa-goers are enthusiastically embracing. "We have seen increased average guest spending in both treatment and retail areas," says spa director Helen Brown. It's really no surprise when you consider the attention to detail that has been devoted to both the spa's programming and retail operation. In fact, retail got a major refresh when the spa partnered with Lolê to open the brand's first spa outpost. The activewear line for women along with Qor, a men's performance brand, complement the spa's seasonal wellness and fitness programs and appeal to Club Solage members. "Our membership revenues are 25 percent higher than budget this year alone," says



Brown. Here she shares some of the reasons the spa, opened in 2007, continues to thrive.

The Bathhouse (top and above) gives guests the opportunity to visit the Mud Bar and soak in the mineral pools.

**Q** To what do you attribute Spa Solage's success over the years?

**A.** I believe it's due to our spectacular outdoor setting and the availability of geothermal mineral pools at our beautiful Bathhouse. In addition, the spa also provides a warm and attentive style of customer service, a wide variety of treatments with high-quality products, and a comprehensive

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assortment of stylish clothing and other items that create a satisfying retail experience.

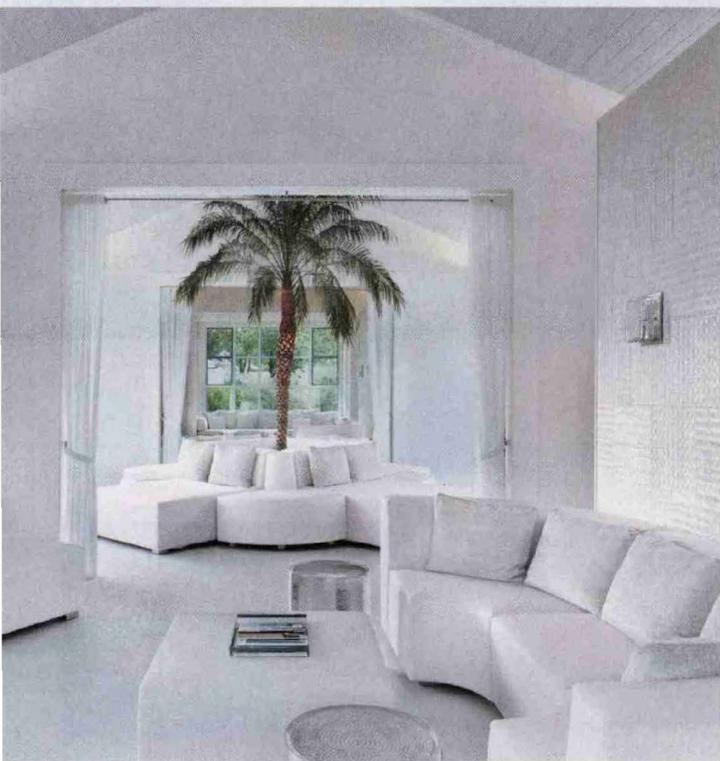
**What have been the biggest challenges in expanding and growing the business?**

**A.** It's the availability of highly trained associates. We have higher requirements than many locations in this state, and so finding team members with the desired amount of training and experience is challenging.

**How do you attract new and repeat clients and encourage them to visit?**

**A.** Recommendations from existing guests are a consistent source of new business for us. We have also had a great deal of coverage and high ratings in a variety of noted publications, which has helped attract new guests. For our existing guests, we have specialty programming seasonally like our Sparkle and Savor series, Wellness Weeks, and Arts in August events that have given them a good reason to return and experience Solage in a different light.

The newly designed indoor and outdoor Relaxation Lounge invites guests to kick back in comfort.



**What did you want to accomplish with the new treatment menu?**

**A.** We wanted to introduce some innovative experiences that would make the most of the unique aspects of Solage that cannot be replicated elsewhere. Experiences like the Floating Meditation and Aqua Yoga in the Bathhouse as well as the Mindful Wine Tasting are some that come to mind. Other experiences aim to involve our guests personally in their experience, engage their sense of fun, and foster creativity and connectedness, such as Intentional Aromatherapy Massage; Soul to Soul, a therapist-guided session for two on giving and receiving a massage; and Partner Yoga.

**How do you keep the menu fresh and relevant?**

**A.** We create seasonal treatments to provide variety and a connection to our natural environment. We work together as a team to source new ingredients and ideas on an ongoing basis to make sure that we are ahead of the curve.

**How do you keep your staff motivated?**

**A.** We recognize that our associates are a key part of our success and invest in their ongoing development and make sure they are provided with the tools they need to excel on a daily basis. Solage has a culture of empowerment, openness, and creativity, and this fosters a team of highly motivated and energized associates who work synergistically to create amazing experiences for our guests and for each other. Solage has generous rewards programs for high-performing associates, and this too, helps maintain the level of engagement and satisfaction of our team members. We also have a history of promotion from within, and this inspires new associates, as they see how far they can grow within the company based on the example provided by many of their leaders.

**What plans do you have for the future?**

**A.** We are developing a series of short yet highly impactful sessions aimed at bringing wellness into our meeting spaces in a way that optimizes the effectiveness of the retreat for our corporate guests. Also, we plan to offer more specialty wellness retreats and creativity-themed activities.—*Heather Mikesell*