

Pure, simple and glamorous

The Organic Pharmacy is a retail phenomenon where beauty meets science. Yet it stays totally true to the brand name at its heart. **Denise Barrett** met creator **Margo Marrone** at her flagship London store.

In the West End's Great Marlborough Street, a stone's throw from the bustle of Oxford Circus, is an oasis of tranquillity dedicated to holistic beauty and wellbeing. The Organic Pharmacy flagship store may now be one of nine worldwide but its original concept, way ahead of its time, remains unwavering.

The Organic Pharmacy was created by husband and wife Margo and Franco Marrone. Everything about the place reflects their personal, immaculate taste, from the therapeutic products and their packaging, the glossy website and the interior design of the stores. It's a clean, unified identity.

Margo Marrone is a qualified pharmacist and homeopath, specialising in herbal medicine and nutrition, and Franco is a designer. It's a perfect marriage of talents.

The products on display are offset beautifully by the store interiors – all pale, neutral walls, embellished frosted glass and blonde wood floors. The high-tech shelves and display chests have a minimalist 'medicine cabinet' touch, with homeopathy bottles filed under 'Dispensary'.



EAT IT, DRINK IT, PUT IT ON YOUR FACE!

Margo's funky new kid on the block is Glamour Food, a sumptuous face and bodycare collection anchored temptingly by Glamour Food Beauty Chocolate, a chocolate bar rich in antioxidant Goji, Açai and Blueberry.

"The inspiration behind Glamour Food," Margo enthuses, "was to create healthy food, free from sugar and additives but based on highly nutritious ingredients that pack as many powerful antioxidants and nutrients as possible to feed the body in a delicious, nutritious way."

"Our first product, Glamour Food Chocolate delivers a powerful 4500 Oxygen Radical Absorbance Capacity (ORAC) per bar. Knowing how efficacious chocolate and berries are, I wanted to combine the same amazing ingredients into a skincare range that was totally natural with food-grade ingredients to feed the skin the same nutrients we were putting inside the body."

Glamour Food is perfect for the person who cares holistically about themselves and wants really clean products for everyday beautiful skin. "Imagine all the scrumptious ingredients of our Glamour Food Beauty Chocolate in your skincare," says Margo.

This alchemic mix includes include Dark Chocolate, Pomegranate, Blueberries, Açai and Goji berries, Caramel, Coconut and Shea Butter.



Franco (left) and Margo Marrone (third from left) with some of the team

RED-CARPET STORE

The West End of London is a global destination. Theatreland is nearby and Regent and Bond Street a stones-throw for retail therapy.

With this in mind, I asked Margo about her customer demographic: "Our W1 store is a great location to spot celebrities. Natalie Portman, Katy Perry, Anne Hathaway and Marion Cotillard have visited. Our typical demographic is women aged 25-55, some working or living in the area and, of course, tourists."

All this is artfully complemented by warm, ambient lighting. You could be in any metropolitan city anywhere in the world. That's all down to Franco's creative genius.

DAMASCENE MOMENT

Margo's story began over 25 years ago. "I was a Saturday girl in my local pharmacy," she says, "and I was enthralled by the rows and rows of amber bottles. I watched person after person come in and ask the pharmacist for help with their various ailments and was captivated as he expertly blended medicines from the amber bottles lining those shelves."

She decided to study pharmacy and six years later began a career as a pharmacist, specialising in herbal medicine and nutrition.

"It wasn't until several years later that I discovered homeopathy, a discipline that completely changed my life and that of my family. As a homeopathic pharmacist I was able to embark on a journey that ultimately led me to create The Organic Pharmacy, along with my husband, Franco."

"The catalyst was when I was pregnant with my daughter. After reading an article by Samuel Epstein (*Safe Shopper's Bible*) I was horrified to find that ingredients found in a lot of skincare products on the market could prove carcinogenic. So I set about creating my own concept that met my criteria of no artificial preservatives, colourants, fragrances, petrochemicals or harsh detergents."

"I also wanted to create a venue where people could walk in off the street as they

do with a conventional pharmacy. We'd offer professional, one-to-one advice on homeopathic and herbal remedies instead of an OTC product from one of the big drug companies. At the same time, I wanted to offer organic and alternative treatments with 21st century appeal and I wanted to present them in an environment that was calming, sophisticated, yet modern.

"Franco and I came up with The Organic Pharmacy, and opened our first store in Chelsea in 2002. What is wonderful, though," adds Margo, "is that this was 12 years ago and it is extraordinary how so many conventional pharmacies have since 'gone holistic' – the very audience that will be reading this article in *Natural Pharmacy Magazine*."

THE WHOLE PICTURE

The Organic Pharmacy manufactures all its products in its factory in London. Own-brand categories include skin, face, body, bath, hair, sun, mother & baby, essential oils, homeopathy, tinctures, multi-blend supplements, scented candles, gifts and cosmetics, labeled Organic Glam.

This range is inspired by Margo's love of iconic looks from the movies, channeling



A PLACE TO CHILL

A concept like The Organic Pharmacy would be incomplete without a spa. The Clinic and Beauty Rooms offer award-winning treatments, from Health Assessment to signature Organic Facial. "I wanted the spa to reflect our ethos," says Margo. "Treatments that transport the client into a world of relaxation while delivering the ultimate facials and body treatments, using our organic preparations. I love combining the latest natural high-tech ingredients in our formulations, so that after an appointment, clients leave with a calm, glowing skin."

LUXE, BESPOKE, HAND-MADE

These magic words define Bespoke Elixir Treatment, the brand new Organic Pharmacy concept exclusive to Selfridges. The antithesis of 'one size fits all', each 'treatment' is created after a one-to-one consultation with the Organic Pharmacy therapist and hand-made on the spot.

"Actually," says Margo, "Organic Pharmacy skin care originally started out as a bespoke treatment. I was formulating and dispensing medicinal creams to help customers' skin conditions. The potions worked so well that they became the basis of our skin care range. Bespoke Elixir specifically looks at ageing. If a woman in her 40s presents with pigmentation, blemishes and dehydration – we have a one-stop cream now."

Audrey Hepburn in *Breakfast at Tiffany's* and Sophia Loren's smoky, sexy eyes. "Elegant, classic and timeless," Margo says, "with easy to wear colours reminiscent of a lost glamour."

I asked Margo about the significance of nutritional supplements (she stocks Higher Nature and Viridian alongside her own brand) and how she believes they work in synergy with the topical and beauty care ranges.

"Our cells, organs and body need certain nutrients to support basic daily functions but also specific imbalances. Supplying these nutrients in a synergistic formula using plant-based nutrients and specific extracts enhances bioavailability. Our organs function optimally and cells can repair efficiently."

"We've also noticed, not surprisingly, a surge in anti-ageing products," says Margo. Her favourites are Rose plus Brightening Complex and Rose plus Marine collagen. "They work so well to restore clarity, reduce wrinkles and, basically, make the skin look younger."

And Margo's personal favourite product? "Definitely Antioxidant Face Firming Serum."