

Shopping With...Jeanine Recckio, Beauty and Lifestyle Futurologist

By Lauren David Peden

April 29, 2005 - New York

"Growing up on a farm in upstate New York, I always knew I wanted to get out," Jeanine Recckio, beauty futurologist and president of the trend forecasting firm Mirror, Mirror told Fashion Wire Daily on a recent sunny Friday morning as we sat in the upstairs cafe at the new Whole Foods Market in Manhattan (4 Union Square South; 212-673-5388; www.wholefoods.com).

"I saw my first Revlon commercial when I was seven," she continued. "My mom wouldn't let me wear makeup but I remember collecting all 72 shades of Revlon nail polish because I had decided that nail polish really wasn't makeup. I always knew that I wanted to get into the cosmetic world."

And so she has, in a way that would make her younger self - the "girly girl" who used to "get all dolled up in full hair, nails and makeup to go out in the onion fields" - proud as punch.

The FIT grad has parlayed early stints in marketing and product development at Estee Lauder, L'Oreal and, yes, Revlon (where she worked not once but twice) into her own lucrative business spotting trends and developing products and packaging for the likes of Sephora, Avon, MAC, Colgate-Palmolive and the Body Shop, among others. Recckio also leads Crystal Ball Trend Tours for busy cosmetics execs in New York, London and Paris who don't otherwise have time to get out of their corner offices and trawl around the Marais or the Meatpacking District for creative inspiration.

"My average client gets between 225 and 1400 e-mails a day," she said of the tours' genesis. "They don't have time to get out of the office, and then everyone goes into the conference room and says, 'OK let's brainstorm!' But there's no stimuli. So we sneak them out for a few hours to check out some of these hot spots."

Most of the hot spots Recckio takes clients to have nothing to do with beauty, per se, so it's less about checking out the competition and more about thinking outside the box.

"We try to train our clients almost as creative coaches, to look beyond the obvious," the bubbly brunette explained. "So they might go into a toy store and pick up a rubber frog and feel the texture of the rubber and say 'Wow, that could be a new texture for a tube or a pump.' Or we might go to a grocery store and look at ingredients for inspiration or look at trend patterns in other lifestyle areas and then translate it into beauty."

Which is something Recckio did quite successfully when she helped develop Jessica Simpson's Dessert line of lickable perfumes, lotions and potions.

"There are two ways you can go in beauty right now," she said as we rode the elevator from the third floor cafe to the basement level. "You can go super tech with nanospheres and things like that, or there is this whole supernatural route that we will see today at Whole Foods. As we were watching this food fusion thing going on, we kind of looked at it and said, 'why *can't* you have a fragrance that you can lick off?'. We decided to launch the world's first lickable fragrance, and it has been very successful."

Recckio credits Thierry Mugler's vanilla scent Angel with kicking off the beauty-food fusion trend, which has continued unabated, whether it's the red wine and grapeseed spa treatments that are so prevalent at resorts nowadays, Bliss Plum Plum Body Butter, Sephora's Cappuccino Creamer Whipped Body Delights and their Chocolate Raspberry Body Gloss stick or Philosophy's Strawberry Ice Cream Body Wash.

"There is so much inspiration coming from the luxury food industry," she enthused. Hence, Recckio's choice of Whole Foods as the site of our Shopping With, so she could show Fashion Wire Daily firsthand just how this beauty futurology business works (her company normally charges at least \$1500 for the service; go to www.mirrormirrorinc.com for details).

The biggest difference between Mirror MIRROR and other trend forecasting firms, confided Recckio,



is that "we take trends and link them to action. We will go to our clients and say 'Here is the trend: It's all about carrots and we are going to design this carrot body scrub and this year you are going to do \$5 million in sales. We have strategic alliances with global manufacturers all over the world, so if you want us to [create] that carrot body scrub for you, we can - and we can do it in record time.'"



We stepped off the elevator and Recckio disentangled a shopping cart from the queue.

"That's becoming our claim to fame," she added as she tossed her purse into the cart. "Most of these big companies take over 18 months to develop a product; we can do it in six months from start to finish. We really help them take the trend and translate it into action by making the widget."

She laughed and pushed her long brown hair behind her shoulders, an Adreani Lucite and Swarovski crystal cuff sparkling on her wrist. "It's all about making the widget. I love these people that talk about the trend, but it's BS until it becomes a widget and makes money." Wow. Tough talk from such a sweet-looking lass.

Recckio turned on her Manolo Blahnik'ed heel and clickety clacked over to a display of Penta Water (another client), and began extolling the virtues of this new product, which claims to be the "purest bottled water on the market" thanks to a 13-step purification process. "The twelfth step is actually patented," she mock-whispered as she opened a bottle of the \$1.99 agua and took a swig. "You get 14 percent more hydration."

We suddenly felt parched, but she was already wheeling her cart toward the Whole Body section. "I'm very much into these organic, vegan, petroleum-free trends right now," she said as she paused in front of a display of Eco Lips Organic Lip Balm (\$2.49).

"Don't Panic, It's Organic!" she read aloud with a chuckle.

"This is really inspirational for a new project that I'm working on," she said. "I think this is the next generation of no animal cruelty or animal testing. We will take this formula back to our scientist at the lab and see what we can do with the whole vegan-friendly claim."

In fact, Recckio planned to send many of the items she bought during our shopping spree to the lab for analysis, something she does as a matter of course.

So what "widget" was she the most proud of having helped invent? "Probably Dessert," she said. "That was very, very successful."

A shelf of eye drops caught her, umm, eye and she picked up one called Computer Eyes (\$7.49).

"I love that they actually made a whole new category," she trilled. "This could be interesting for an eye cream - to use this for new claims, new ideas, new formulas. We will pick this up for inspiration for a big new eye cream that we are working on with a major cosmetics company." Big new eye cream? Major cosmetics company?! Do tell. She smiled cryptically.

A few feet away, she stopped and examined a bottle of something called CellFood (\$24.95), which came with a brochure promising all sorts of health-related miracles, one drop of oxygenated nutrients at a time. "This is *very* interesting," she said. "I'm working on some big oxygen formulations and this [product] has to do with nutrients, electrolytes and oxygen. What we are going to do is try putting oxygen in a toner or face cream to see if it changes the emulsion and to see if we can get more nutrients and oxygen [to the skin]. The claims here are fabulous - it seems to have a lot of buzzwords everyone is looking for in skin creams today. We'll take it and see if we can do something topically with it. This, to me, looks very progressive."

Recckio progressed herself over to a rack of shiny silver hot-and-cold thermal bags (\$3.29) and tossed one into her cart ("In the future, all your natural beauty products will be refrigerated since they won't be using preservatives or chemicals. We'll take this to our packaging department and try to figure out how to mimic the fabrication.")

As we passed the frozen food aisle, Recckio told us how impressed she'd been by a recent trip to "Marks & Sparks" in London, where all the meat was packaged in a much more uniform, eye-catching way than it is in American supermarkets and - after bemoaning the lack of sell-by dates on beauty products - informed us that she felt most cosmetics should be replaced every few months, and mascara even more often.

"I think you should throw them out every few weeks," she opined. "They start drying out and get all flaky and cracky. I can't *believe* how long some women keep mascara."

Recckio oohed over a display of pink, blue and green colanders ("So cute!") before alighting on a box of No Pudge Fat Free Brownie Mix (\$2.79), which bore an adorable illustration of a little pig with a yellow tape measure around its Karl Lagerfeld-worthy waist.

"How funny," she said as she scanned the letter on the back of the box. "I love looking at some of the copy for inspiration. [The owner's] title is brownieholistic and founder. It's cute. The box is pink. We like the copy." Into the cart it went.

As did a cherimoya fruit from the produce aisle ("I've never heard of cherimoya, have you? This could be a new body scrub ingredient"), a pink-hued light bulb ("this is the key to looking good; it's all about lighting"), fuschia rubber dishwashing gloves by Casabella, along with some Casabella royal blue scrub brushes with a contrasting heart pattern in the center ("I think this company is brilliant," she enthused. "Why should your kitchen look bland and boring? I want my sponge to be *pretty!*")

Her paeon to all things pretty was interrupted by a Casabella rep, who happened to be standing nearby restocking the shelf. After a brief conversation in which she outlined all the ways in which Mirror Mirror could help boost the hip quotient of their brand even further, Recckio piloted her cart to the escalator, and we headed up to the main floor.

"Once you shop like this you will never shop the same," she said of her trendspotting tendencies, which were beginning to rub off on FWD's writer and photographer, both of whom had begun pointing out various packaging, labeling and display details, much to Recckio's amusement.

After a quick stop at the bakery counter to ogle some "adorable!" miniature candy apples and chocolate coffee cups, she tossed some vegan vanilla marshmallows into her stash ("I wonder what's holding it together?"), and paused to peruse a copy of "Living Without" magazine before heading to the register to pay (total: \$84.73).

"I've never heard of this magazine," she said as she scanned articles on sulfer-free wine and nontoxic household cleansers. "This is very interesting. It's turning the negative into a positive - something I think we saw throughout the whole store."

And with that, Recckio headed out to make the world just a little bit prettier - and to find out what makes a vegan vanilla marshmallow stick.

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