

LIFE**A trend-setter for 30 years, Faye Tamba earns high praise for award-winning 5-star spa**

By Joe Belanger, The London Free Press
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Faye Tamba, owner of Faye Spa, at his retreat in London on Wednesday July 24, 2013. CRAIG GLOVER The London Free Press / QMI AGENCY

A chance meeting with a beauty queen changed Faye Tamba's life.

But it was Tamba who took hairstyling to a new level, building an award-winning spa business and helping to change an industry.

Now Faye Spa is celebrating its 30th anniversary as one of the country's top spas, a five-star operation in Lambeth.

"I used to help my aunt at her home and one day I arrived and she had a house guest," recalled Tamba, sitting his office while an army of estheticians, therapists and stylists use their talents on several dozen clients as soothing music spills gently from a sound system.

“My aunt told me to bring the woman coffee and when I went there, she was so beautiful. Then she asked me to get her a curling iron. I found one and returned and watched as she tried to curl her hair. I offered to help. I just wanted to touch her. When I was done, she said I should be a hairdresser. She said ‘your feel, your touch, your look — that’s what you should be doing.’”

Tamba took her advice and Saturday celebrated the anniversary with a party at Green Hills Golf Club for clients, employees, friends, suppliers, industry colleagues and others.

Tamba took his hairstyling talents to heights few others reach, incorporating manicures, pedicures, facials, massage and water therapies and variations of all into his business that occupies an 8,500-square-foot building on Wharncliffe Rd. S. and employs 45 stylists, estheticians, massage therapists and other service professionals.

It all began in the small Lebanese town of Baalbek (now a World Heritage site for its Imperial Roman architecture) before the 15-year civil war that began in 1975.

Tamba opened his first shop in Baalbek, renting space for a small shop. One day, a relative of his mother’s, also a male hairstylist, arrived for a visit from Canada and invited Tamba to London for a visit. Tamba took up the invitation with the intention of returning home. However, he stayed a few months and the owner of the building that housed his salon seized his equipment for unpaid rent and closed the shop.

So, Tamba started working in Canada, again with the intention of earning enough money to re-open his own shop in Lebanon. Then the civil war broke out and Tamba’s mother, who’d been pleading for his return, urged him to stay.

Tamba settled in London, working for about \$125 a week. After a couple of years, he opened his own salon at the corner of Southdale and Adelaide streets.

“I was doing very well,” recalled Tamba. “I had a lot of regular clients and, at that time, I started to see an opportunity to introduce more services. A woman needs lots of attention and I thought why not combine everything in one place? So I came to the conclusion to offer everything from hair to toes.”

So, Tamba moved to a larger location at Dearness and Bradley Avenue in 1983, employing two other stylists and three estheticians and therapists, offering a wide range of services from hair styling to manicures, pedicures, body treatments, facials, sauna, whirlpool, tanning and much more.

“We struggled a lot because people didn’t know what a spa was all about and there were not enough people with the skills,” said Fayeze. “So I had to train a lot of them. But I was making very good money doing hair and I put it all into the spa.”

With seven employees (three, including himself doing hair) the business grew.

“I think what helped me a lot was being there at the right time and right place,” said Tamba. “I saw there was something coming (in consumer demand) so I started offering Fayeze Days, where a woman would spend a whole day at the spa and at the end leave feeling like a million dollars about how they look and feel. Men started buying their wives Fayeze Days and people loved it. I would go to a party and hear people who didn’t know who I was talking about Fayeze Days. When I saw that reaction from people, I thought I could capture more.”

So, Tamba moved again, this time to Wharncliffe Rd. in Lambeth. At first, Fayeze wasn’t impressed with the location or the building.

“So, one day I sat there, I don’t know for how many hours, and started counting cars. I found out there were thousands of cars passing by every single day,” said Tamba, who bought and renovated the building and hired more staff.

“I thought I’d be extremely happy if I could increase business by 20%,” said Fayeze. “In the first four years, business increased 500%.”

Today, Tamba has more than 2,000 clients.

Among his employees are his two sons, Ali, 35, and Adam, 25, both stylists, and daughter, Janine, 24, a school teacher who works part-time at the spa.

His wife, Jacqueline, doesn’t work at the spa.

Fayeze Spa has been recognized as Southern Ontario’s first accredited 5-Star Spa, has ranked among the top 50 spas in Canada the last two years, the Best in London and has received the coveted Distinguished Day Spa of Canada Award from the Day Spa Association of America.

“I spent an idyllic day in June at Fayeze spa,” wrote Anna Hobbs, Canadian travel writer and 5-star spa inspector, in an e-mail while on vacation.

“It lived up to the glowing reputation that I had heard about for years and was well worth the three-hour drive to get there. Fayeze Tamba gets it right — a beautiful, full-service facility and an exceptional, caring, professional staff. More than just pampered, I left feeling relaxed and rejuvenated.”

His competitors are equally effusive.

Elizabeth Milan, who owns the renowned Elizabeth Milan Spa at Toronto’s Fairmont Royal York Hotel, was the first to congratulate Tamba when he received the best day spa award.

“He is a fabulous man. He’s very professional, always ahead of the game,” said Milan in a telephone interview, adding Tamba was a “driving force” to bring high standards of excellence to Canada’s spa industry.

“He’s a trendsetter, always looking for new and better ways to do things. He has the passion. And to be in the business for 30 years and still have that passion is remarkable, especially for a man in this business (dominated by women). When you’ve been in the business that long, it means you have a lot of repeat clientele, that you’re doing it right.”

Said Tamba: “I love what I do. I respect my clients, I respect my business and I always try to do my best to exceed my clients’ expectations.”

joe.belanger@sunmedia.ca

Poll

Have you ever been to FayeZ Spa?

Wednesday, November 15, 2017

- Yes
- No, but I plan to!
- Not interested

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