

I.C.O.N. breathes Re:life into beauty

Beauty Industry Report (BIR) recently had the opportunity to visit with **Chiara Scudieri**, president of **I.C.O.N.** Chiara is a partner in the business with **Jorge Rubin**, who also owns and operates the **Jorge Rubin Salon**. **Jorge** spends equal time in his native Spain, where he continues the development of I.C.O.N. and in Los Angeles, where I.C.O.N.'s U.S. offices are based. In the past year and a half, they have completely transformed the company's product line, and **BIR** stopped by to get the scoop.

BIR: Chiara, let's start at the recent Cosmoprof North America, where you showed your two new product collections and talked about Re:Life, the newest evolution in your product line. Please share that story.

Chiara Scudieri (CS): We are absolutely committed to creating as green a company as possible. Re:life is all about the possibilities a new vision creates both now and in the future. When we embarked on this adventure, a re:adventure, we decided that all of our products needed to follow that sustainable philosophy. That's why each has been revisited and where appropriate, improved. For example, our shampoos are now sulfate free. Conditioners and treatments are filled with anti-agers, vitamins A, C and E, plus additional antioxidants and more. Our **Liquid Fashion** products—our stylers—are equally responsible, all without sacrificing any quality.

BIR: At the beginning of the year, you introduced India, a hair care collection that features moringa oil and argan oil. Argan oil's popularity has made it almost a household word. How does moringa oil work in your new product range?

CS: Moringa comes from a tree in India and contains more than 90 nutrients, including four times as much vitamin A as a carrot, 17 times as much calcium as a glass of milk, 15 times as much potassium as in a banana, seven times as much vitamin C as in an orange and 25 times as much iron as in a serving of spinach. Just

imagine what it can do to help heal hair! Moringa oil helps each strand of hair to hold needed moisture to create a smoother, stronger cuticle. We fell in love with this oil, as well as with argan and amber. Blended together in our India product line, those three oils transform hair from dull and lifeless to silky, manageable and full of shine. We call it hair-yurvedics. Currently, the line includes a shampoo, conditioner and oil. But, the end of the year, we will add a balm and a 24K gold mask treatment.

BIR: You refer to your new Stain Glass semi-permanent hair color as, "a cathedral of hair color." Please describe the line, its saturation, its luminance and its refraction capabilities.

CS: I am so excited about Stained Glass and what it represents to hairdressers. The colors are vibrant, tone-on-tone shades that work to seal in permanent color, as well as to enhance

natural color. When we first envisioned this color, we knew we wanted it to be better and different than any other color line in terms of its saturation level and its ability to truly create luminosity. Each

application changes the hair's texture, creating a silkier feel and a glossier look. The color and shine aren't just on the hair's surface—they're inside each hair—so the hair shines from within. Plus it acts as both a semi-permanent and a demi-permanent.

Each formula has smaller molecules than temporary dyes so that it can partially penetrate the cuticle without damaging it. And the color will last through a number of shampoos—up to 30 days worth. It also allows for more effective gray coverage while still being more gentle to the hair than permanent color. With 20 minutes of hooded-dryer heat, color is essentially sealed into and onto the hair for shine and color. What's created is both semi- and demi-permanent.



The new India hair care collection features moringa oil and argan oil.

BIR: How do you and Jorge run the company, which operates both in the United States and in Europe?

CS: Both Jorge and I have always believed that any successful partnership must have two halves that form a whole. He and I have that. He is completely focused on the business and marketing aspect of the company, creating seminars exclusively for salon owners with business-building ideas. I'm dedicated to the creative side, developing the products, deciding on our collections and conducting the photo shoots. We're both bilingual, making it easy to move between Spain and the United States. With Jorge's business sense and my creative acumen, we're the perfect team!

BIR: In your marketing materials, you make the statement, "I.C.O.N. has always been about the art of dressing hair. We understand its power; we live and breathe its responsibility. It is about making you feel good, about making hair better and sexier with touch therapy, regimedes, cocktails, liquid fashion and with education." Please elaborate.

CS: Touch therapy is one of the foundations of I.C.O.N. We believe that hair is about the sensual aspect of touch, and through products and massage techniques in our care bar, we hope to transform each client's experience. "Regimedes" are a combination of regimens and remedies to help clients care for their hair between salon appointments. We have four: hydration, detox, anti-aging and indulgence. All of the products in those groups are built on our EcoTech philosophy, too—representing a merger of the best in ecology with advanced technology.

Liquid Fashion is our styling tool line, which gives the ability to dress hair to go with a wardrobe. We recommend cocktailing any two or three of our Liquid Fashion stylers by mixing them together to form something completely new. Our entire program of educational seminars and classes breaks down each of our foundations into a comprehensive, teachable form. Our education menu is very extensive, from cutting to touch therapy to styling to color and more.

BIR: Please share about I.C.O.N.'s dedication to "Cure for Cause."

CS: **Cure**, our flagship product, has been very special to us for a long time. It was the first product I envisioned for I.C.O.N., as a treatment that could transform hair—cure it, in essence. But it has evolved to be more than that, becoming the product that supports our philanthropic outreach. We want to focus on finding a cure for cancer by donating proceeds from the sale of Cure to cancer research foundations like **Stop Cancer**. This is very personal to me. I lost my mother to breast cancer; my sister has battled it twice; and I have a daughter and a step-daughter. We have donated tens of thousands of dollars, and we'll continue to do so. We've incorporated Cure into many of our monthly promotions to raise more money, and we'll be funding our second research grant with Stop Cancer this year. Plus on October 2 in Woodley Park in Van Nuys, CA, we'll co-sponsor our second annual 5K run/walk. If anyone wants to participate, I invite them to visit stopcancerwalk.org.

BIR: Please share your personal story of how you got to where you are today.

CS: Cure was the catalyst. The idea for it really launched the company, and from there, we developed shampoos, conditioners, treatments and styling tools. As a hairdresser, I knew the kinds of products I wanted to use. They simply didn't exist, so we made them. I also had extensive experience working in a lab, testing different formulations from when I worked in research and development at **Sebastian** and then **Wella**. That experience proved to be invaluable. Today at our I.C.O.N. Lab, we test each new product and also see clients for services. Doing that on a regular basis also keeps me very in tune with what the public wants.

BIR: How many salons are affiliated with I.C.O.N.?

CS: As partners, we have built the I.C.O.N. salon and lab in Woodland Hills, CA. We hold seminars there, and I use the space to test our newest product formulations. In Spain, Jorge has four **Jorge Rubin Salons**. They operate on a very green philosophy and incorporate all of the I.C.O.N. products and services, naturally. There are more than 600 I.C.O.N. concept salons across Spain, again all incorporating

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touch therapy, the care bar, products and more.

BIR: You've mentioned the care bar before. What exactly is the care bar?

CS: The care bar is our evolution of the back bar. Because we incorporate our Touch Therapy techniques and more, transforming the ritual of shampoo into more of an experience, we decided that care bar was actually more in tune with our philosophy.

BIR: What is your company's overall operating philosophy, and how do you approach each day?

CS: Each day is an adventure. Our philosophy has always been based on putting salons and hairdressers first. We start each morning thinking about what we can do to improve the industry and make stylists' lives easier and salons' businesses more profitable.

Each day, we discover new technologies and new ingredient systems that can make our products better. This year's launch of India is an example of that. So our overall philosophy is to do the best and be the best always, and to approach each day with great anticipation and positive energy.

BIR: In the crowded salon hair care category, what is I.C.O.N.'s point of difference?

CS: We are our own company—our own bosses—meaning we're not owned by a big conglomerate that has lost sight of what is important in this industry—such as art and creativity. We always give the hairdressers what they need—not what we think they need. We listen to them, we visit with as many as possible and then we formulate products and collections accordingly.

BIR: Tell me about your education program.

CS: We provide a wide variety of classes and seminars, both at the salon level and in larger venues—from basic product knowledge and EcoTech through cutting and styling, our State of Collections, Liquid Fashion and our Genius program, in which hairdressers train to become part of our team. It's important for anyone affiliated with I.C.O.N. to completely understand the company's philosophy, our commitment and what goes into each product. We have a team that travels the world to spread our unique message. Our director of education is **Nancy Ortiz**, and she and I work very closely to develop our programs.

BIR: What is the best business advice you ever received, and who was it from?

CS: That one's easy. "Stay consistent with your message and be determined with your goals." Jorge taught me that.

BIR: What inspires you?

CS: I'm inspired by so much. Obviously, the world is an ever-changing place, with art, music, architecture, design, fashion and technology. It all feeds into one ideal, and it all helps shape and form who I am, as well as who we are as a company. My eyes are always open and looking forward.



Chiara Scudieri

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