

# Brazilian Keratin: Getting the truth out

**K**eratin treatment systems continue to be one of the salon industry's fastest growing product categories. In late 2006, **Marcia Teixeira's Brazilian Keratin Treatment** became the first product of its kind introduced to the U.S. market, and it continues to be one of the leading brands worldwide. It has been just over a year since the *Beauty Industry Report (BIR)* sat down with **Marcia** and **Marcelo Teixeira**, founder and president of **M & M International, Inc.**, the corporate identity behind Marcia's namesake product line. We are delighted to share this update with **BIR's** readers.

**BIR: What is the story that you want to share with BIR's readers?**

**Marcia Teixeira (Marcia):** To dispel the myths surrounding the category and do what we can to slow the perpetuation of inaccurate information circulating throughout the media and all over the Internet. At the same time, we want to share the details of our phenomenal growth and expansion over the past year.

**BIR: What are the myths and inaccurate information you are referring to?**

**Marcelo Teixeira (Marcelo):** As we discussed more than a year ago in our October 2008 interview, formaldehyde remains a dominant concern where keratin treatments are concerned. At least 38 other brands have joined us in the marketplace since we introduced the category in 2006. Several of them that we know of adamantly deny that their products contain or produce formaldehyde. Those same competitors have often made negative comments about our products and company, and continue to mislead the market about their own products, while we have always, and continue to market our products on their own merits and the facts. The March 2009 issue of *Salon Today* included an in-depth article that provided the most accurate information we have yet to see or hear in the media. Facts that we have been communicating for several years were correctly stated in the article. For example, "The success of—and confusion about—Brazilian-style keratin products opened the door for a slew of 'formalin-free' formulations, currently calling themselves 'formaldehyde-free.' But keratin

alone cannot create the desired, long lasting 'frizz-busting' results." It is important for professionals and consumers to educate themselves to understand that if any manufacturer boasts results that will last for several months, the product must contain methylene glycol (formalin), or another compound that will react with heat to produce formaldehyde. Without it, there is no ingredient that will enable the keratin in the hair to cross link with the keratin introduced into the cuticle by the treatment, which is what ultimately produces the highly desired results.

We emphasize education and safety for the benefit of our professional clients and their customers. Our training/certification program includes a full explanation of OSHA's PEL (permissible exposure limit) for formaldehyde. We provide laboratory analyses documenting that the level of formaldehyde produced by our treatments is below OSHA's safe harbor limit of 0.75 PPM (parts per million) over an eight hour period, and/or for the STEL (short term exposure limit) of 2 over a 15 minute period during the high-heat steps of the treatment process.

**BIR: What advice can you give to salon owners and stylists who are considering adding a keratin treatment or already have one?**

**Marcia:** We encourage everyone, especially professionals, to be as informed as they possibly can. Professionals should only purchase and use products that include full disclosure of their ingredients and state where the products are manufactured. Our entire product line is manufactured in the United States in an FDA approved facility. Clients should insist on receiving an MSDS (material safety data sheet) for every professional product they use. Especially where keratin treatments are concerned, professionals should request analysis reports documenting that the levels of formaldehyde exposure are below OSHA's permissible limits. We commend and respect our fellow manufacturers who also fully disclose the facts surrounding their products, and we invite those who continue to bend the truth to join us in our mission to educate, educate, educate.

The origin and quality of the keratin is also a major consideration. The keratin in our treatments is extracted from the wool of New Zealand sheep by means of the patented Keratec process. Our keratin is certified to be free of TSE/BSE (transmissible spongiform encephalopathy/bovine spongiform encephalopathy), which we are required to document when registering our products with the health departments of other countries. It's important for clients to know where the keratin in the products they use comes from. Some manufacturers may use synthetic keratin, which does not bond as well as natural keratin.

**BIR: Tell me about the expansion of your distributor network.**

**Marcelo:** 2009 has been a whirlwind year. We have traveled to places we never thought we would see—all over the United States, Italy, France, Czech Republic, Turkey, the United Kingdom—the list goes on. We are fortunate to have solidified relationships with some of the most well respected and successful distributors throughout the world. At this time last year, we had six distributors in the U.S. We now have 12 covering 38 states. We also have 18 international distributors. Our products can be found in salons in more than 50 countries.

**BIR: How have you doubled your domestic distributor network in just over one year?**

**Marcelo:** Still being a relatively young company, we are fortunate to have **Bill Decker** working with us to develop our U.S. distributor network. His years of industry experience and long-standing relationships have been key to the success we've had in developing our own relationships with an impressive group of distributors. Bill understands and shares our philosophy—that of a combination of strong ethics, excellent customer service, the need for consistent education and requiring certification. We are still looking for quality distributors who share our philosophy.

**BIR: Tell me about your international business.**

**Marcia:** We have distributors servicing salons in the United Kingdom, the Republic of Ireland, Greece, the Middle East, the Czech Republic, Russia, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Estonia, Latvia, Finland, Lithuania, Spain, Turkey, Puerto Rico,



Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Panama, Ecuador, Venezuela, Australia, etc. We also have salons in other countries that are not yet covered by distributors; for example, Sweden, France, Mexico, Peru and Guatemala.

**BIR: What has been your biggest challenge?**

**Marcia:** To put it simply, growing pains! Our expansion has been overwhelming at times. Our first few distributors helped us work through some of the kinks in our system and pave the way for our newer additions. While we continue to improve and learn as we go, there is always room for improvement. We are in a constant state of evolution in every sense—everything from internal operations to customer service to our public image.

**BIR: What is your point of difference that has propelled you to the top of the category?**

**Marcelo:** By introducing the entire category of keratin treatments to the U.S. salon industry, we laid the groundwork for what has become a worldwide sensation. Once other brands began cropping up, what we encountered then and continue to see is that stylists who used our treatment first and then experimented with other brands came back to us 9 out of 10 times. We have heard it over and over again—our results are shinier, last longer, and produce consistently superior results when the treatment is repeated. Other points that set us apart are our full disclosure surrounding our ingredients, formaldehyde, where our products are manufactured, the accuracy of the data on our MSDSs and the consistency of our formulas. We believe that the superior, consistent results achieved by our treatments are due to our unique ingredients, including high quality keratin, proprietary blends of amino acids, moisturizing agents and thermal protection ingredients.

**BIR: The category has undergone rapid growth. Do you think the demand is getting close to the saturation point?**

**Marcia:** Not at all. There are still thousands of salons that have not yet added a keratin treatment to their menus. As the public becomes more knowledgeable and professionals learn the facts surrounding the category, keratin treatments will become nearly as commonplace as color and will eventually be a standard salon service. We have years of growth ahead of us.

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**BIR: What are your primary goals for BKT?**

**Marcelo:** As Marcia mentioned, we are continuing to evolve as a business, while becoming more well-known around the world. We have created our own big shoes to fill, so we need to concentrate on developing our infrastructure in order to successfully support our distributors. We will continue to participate in numerous trade shows to maintain our public presence. Originally, our business was built on word-of-mouth and trade show exposure—methods that continue to serve us well. Now we have the added benefit of our distributor network to broaden the scope of our presence in the marketplace. We intend to

continue building our brand with marketing programs such as in-salon promotions.

**BIR: Tell me about the Buriti Serum that you introduced at Cosmoprof North America.**

**Marcelo:** Our Buriti (boo-ree-chee) Serum is derived from the nut that grows on the Moriche Palm found in the Amazon Rainforest. It has a light, pleasant, flowery aroma, is non-greasy, and is absorbed quickly. Antioxidants and essential fatty acids restore hair fiber, increase elasticity, add moisture and build strength, providing softness and shine. Buriti Serum can be used on wet or dry hair.

**BIR: What are some of your most popular products and why?**

**Marcia:** We have three different formulas to accommodate a wide range of hair textures. Our maintenance shampoos and conditioners are wildly popular. We have three varieties of sodium chloride and sulfate free shampoos and conditioners, all specially formulated to prolong the results of our treatments. Each variety has a special combination of herbal ingredients found in the Amazon Rainforest, blended with keratin. They contain UV protection and can be used on all hair types. We also have our **Magic Tape**, a Teflon coated tape that is wrapped around the plates of the flat iron. It evenly distributes heat across the surface of the plates, preventing hot spots and creating a layer of thermal protection between the hair and the surface of the flat iron. Using our Magic Tape will significantly reduce the fumes produced when the product comes into contact with high heat, and cut the number of passes stylists need to do on each section of hair in half or better because of the thermal protection it provides. That makes the treatment less labor intensive for the stylist, while saving time too—and time is money. It’s also a benefit for customers who don’t have a Brazilian keratin treatment, but use flat irons frequently.

**BIR: Is there anything you would like to add?**

**Marcelo:** We are humbled by our success and grateful for the loyalty and dedication of our employees, distributors and clients. We thank each and every one of you for your ongoing support and faith in us, and wish you all a healthy and prosperous New Year.

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