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CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT:
DARCIE GLAZER KASSEWITZ,
MARY FREITAS, TRACY SMITH,
TIFFANY CLOUTIER

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EAU WOW

BY LOLA THÉLIN
PHOTOGRAPHY BY SIG BOKALDERS

THREE PALM BEACH GIRLFRIENDS
SHARE CHAMPAGNE WISHES AND
DIAMOND DREAMS AT EAU SPA.

Eau Spa's majestic space features a domed copper leaf ceiling.

Opposite page: Weston, Koons and Weingartner begin their day in the Self-Centered Garden.







There only are a few places where time stands still and friendships strengthen. With its wild mix of indulgence, decadence and fun, the Ritz-Carlton, Palm Beach's Eau Spa is one of those places. They have modernized the spa experience by transforming it into an atmosphere where talking and playing is as much a part of it as unwinding. More importantly, the concept gives guests the time and space to bond with companions.

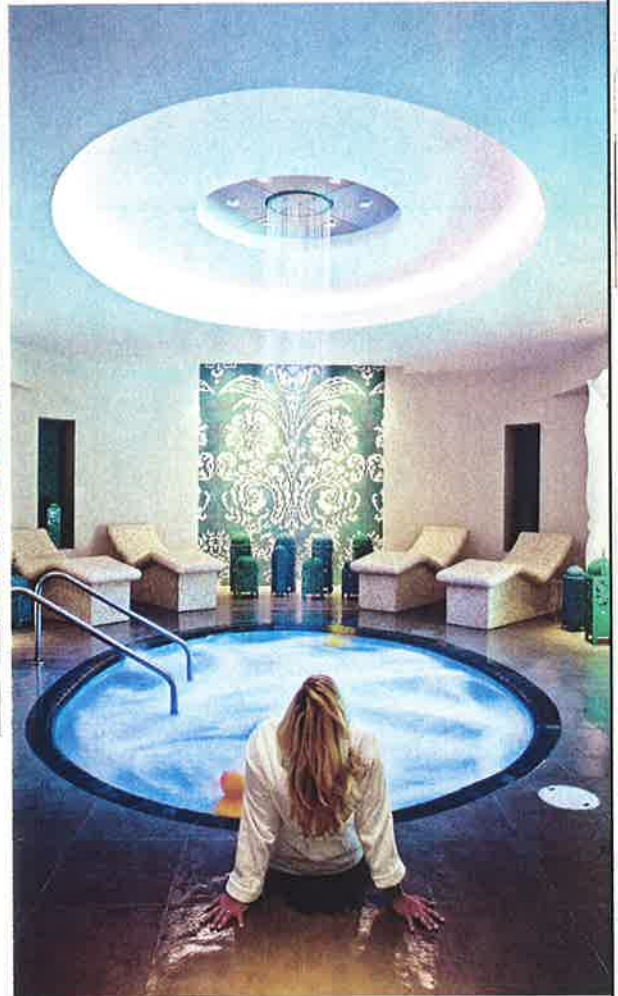
"We want our guests to indulge in well-deserved 'me' time but this also is a place where you can bring friends to enjoy a fun and whimsical time," says Kirstie Bolitho, director of Eau Spa. "Where else can you linger all day swinging on chairs in an open-air garden or make your own personal scrub mix?"

After sipping on fresh coffee in the Ritz-Carlton lounge, sisters Jordann Weingartner and Holly Weston and partner in crime Kathleen Koons are ready to experience this revolutionary universe and partake in the spa's philosophy, "pause, play and perfect." It's been a year of weddings, honeymoons, engagements, graduations and babies, and these three girls are well deserving of a little fun and relaxation.

"We've been giddy about having this amazing day together," says Weingartner, designer and owner of Jordann Jewelry. Weingartner was married on May 9, and has been busy expanding her jewelry company. Her older sister, Weston, married a year ago this month and had a baby boy this past August. Koons received her MBA in finance from the University of Miami this May, got engaged in April and will marry May 2010.

"There's so much going on in our lives that sometimes you have to stop," says Koons, who is studying for her certified financial analyst test. "At Eau Spa, you can't pull out your BlackBerry or be sidetracked by computers and televisions. It's really nice to sit here, eat and talk, and that's that."

The Ritz-Carlton debuted the 42,000-square-foot Eau Spa in March of this year as part of the final phase in the hotel's two-year renovation. The new \$30-million retreat does not disappoint. It engages adults in a delightful spa experience with exotic beauty treatments, like the precious gems and metals-infused facials, and eclectic touches throughout like yellow rubber ducks, large chess pieces and bobbleheads. There is so much to do



Top to bottom: Relaxing in the open-air sanctuary; Weingartner dips her legs in the hot tub; a toast to the ultimate girls day. Opposite page: Giant chess pieces in the garden.





The ladies enjoy a light gourmet feast, and then some time swinging in the basket chairs over a pool of cooling water.

and see, on both the male and female sides of the spa, including the open-air Self-Centered Garden, the bath lounge where a water shower circle falls from the ceiling into a hot tub, the scrub and polish bar (guests concoct their own scrub of herbs, oils and sea salts), a relaxation lounge dubbed the “Eau Zone” where the infamous chocolate cupcakes are found, and 19 spa villas, some with outdoor gardens and tubs.

The spa journey begins in the lobby with the Wishing Well, where guests are encouraged to make a wish and set a candle afloat. The ladies then move

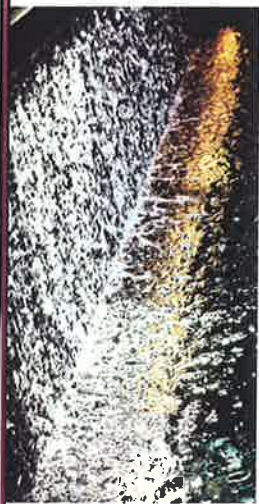
to the Self-Centered Garden. Dressed in white robes, they rest in the swinging basket chairs over a shallow pool of water. “This is heaven,” says Koons. The conversation returns to Koons’ recent graduation and her living in Miami, then on to Weston’s baby and Weingartner’s marriage. It’s the first time in a while the girlfriends have been able to reflect and bond over their life-changing events; then, the conversation turns goofy as they let their bodies and minds further unwind.

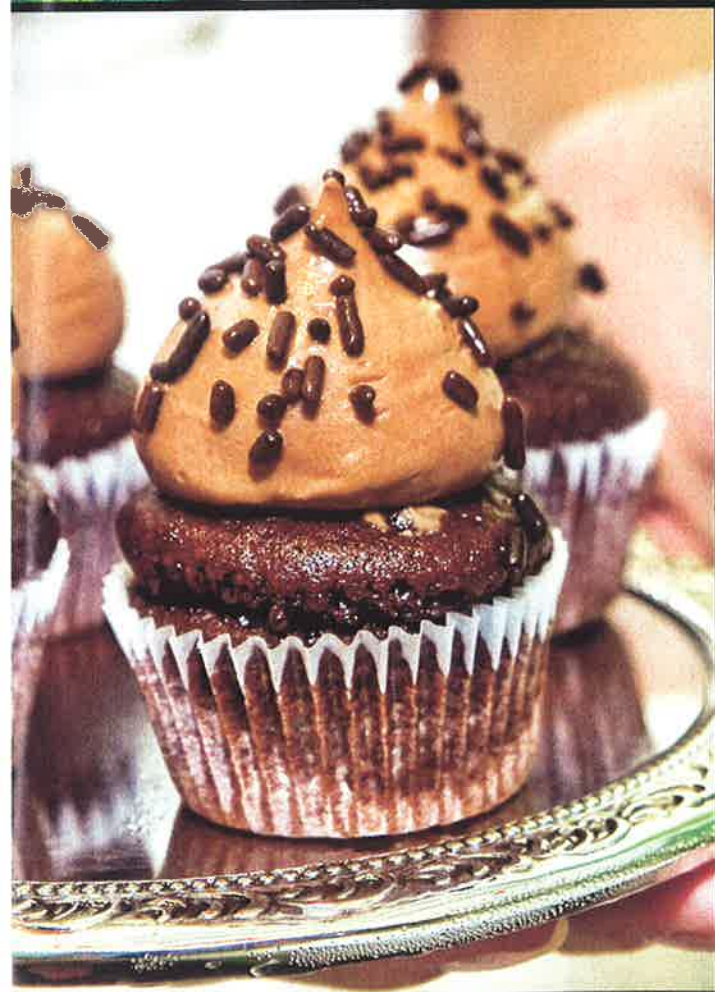
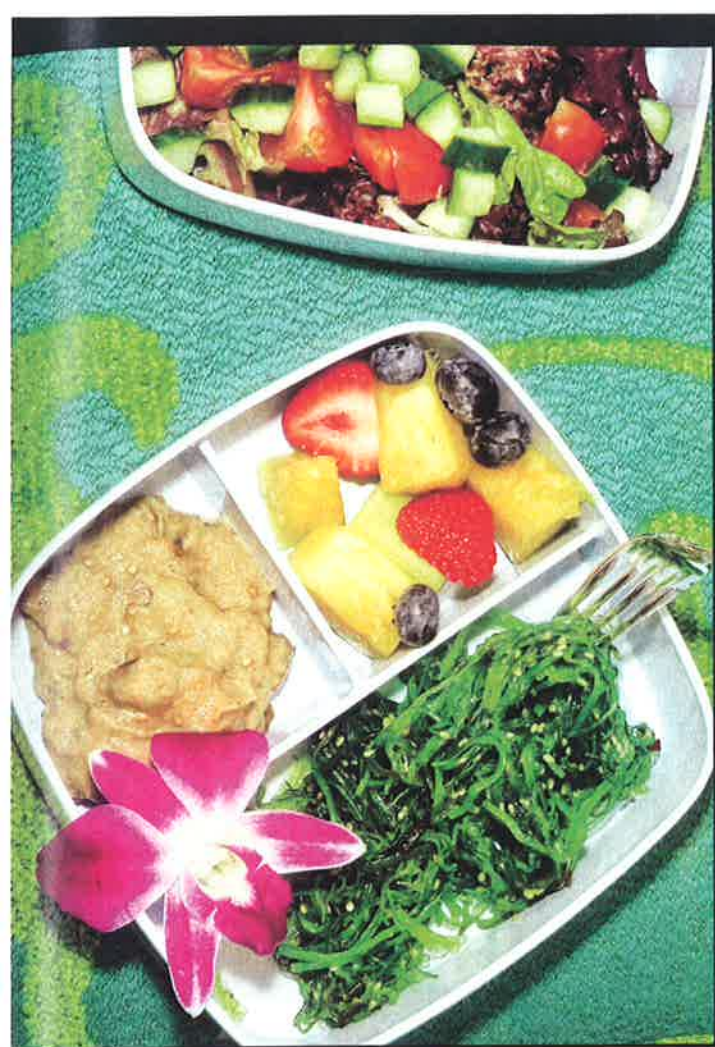
“When Holly was on her honeymoon in Hawaii, she bought a fertility necklace. She returned and was wearing it, and then the next month, she was pregnant,” says Weingartner. “When I got married, she passed the necklace on to me. I’ve been wearing it and if it works, I’ll pass it on to Kathleen after she’s married.”

When growing up, Koons and Weingartner, who met at Palm Beach Day School in pre-K, idolized Weston with her cool clothes, Doc Martens and weird music. “Because of Holly, we were ahead of the curve,” says Koons.

“Holly did nothing wrong in my eyes,” adds Weingartner. “I always looked up to her.”

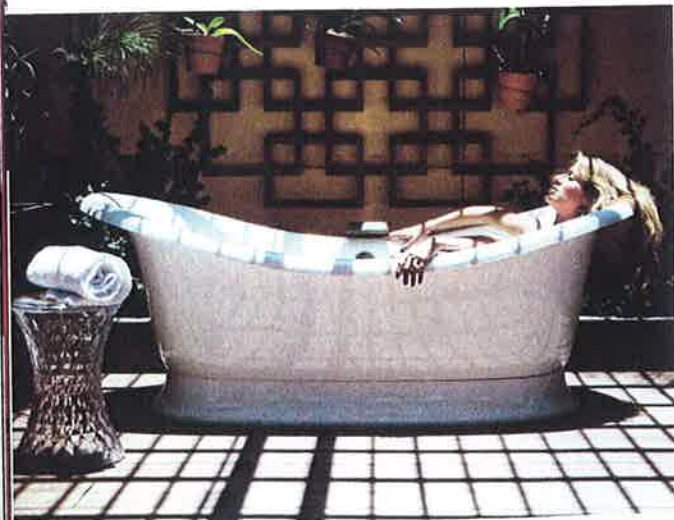
Despite Weingartner being five and a half years younger, Weston had no qualms with her little sister and friends tagging along. “There was never any sister rivalry. We were in different places,” explains Weston. “She was my fun little sister and had crazy friends that were always energetic and entertaining with personalities.”







Top to bottom:
The Scrub and Polish bar; Weingartner receives the platinum and diamond facial while Weston melts away in a private villa tub. Opposite page: The girls relax in the Eau Zone.



The bonding continued when Weston attended New York University in New York City, where Koons and Weingartner visited her during school breaks. "I would take them around the city or we'd go shopping. I'd dress them up in little outfits, and sometimes we'd sneak into dance clubs," says Weston. "Then I stayed in New York City and Kathleen went to NYU too, so we became very close. You get to a certain age in your twenties when age doesn't matter anymore."

The girls continue to reminisce about their golden days while late morning transitions into early afternoon. A miniature buffet of delectable snacks is laid out by the staff. Everything from a variety of salads, wraps and hummus to exotic cocktails and even a drink served in a pineapple looks and tastes phenomenal.



"It's not that we don't have to work at it but they are easy friendships," says Weingartner. "Even though there is an age difference between us, Holly and I are best friends. It's an even greater [relationship] because we're sisters. With Kathleen, we've experienced a lot of great first memories together. It's like a sister relationship too, because we can get mad at each other and can call each other out but by the end

of the day, we're friends again."

The girls head indoors and settle into the inviting armchairs in the Eau Zone to recuperate from lunch and discuss beauty treatments. Koons decides on the bamboo massage, Weston picks the prenatal massage and Weingartner, the platinum and diamond facial.

"I love this room," says Koons. "I like that if you [don't] want to be all natural and drink cucumber water, you can drink your wine and eat your cupcakes and not feel bad about it because obviously other people want to do that too."

After the treatments, Koons, Weingartner and Weston begin their descent back to the real world. "After we left, we all said that we felt like celebrities. The attention to detail and the treatments were heaven, and walking into the space was breathtaking," says Weingartner. "We've been preoccupied with our private lives. It was great to come together and have a stress-free day, just the three of us, and not have to worry about what's next or anything for the entire day. We put it all behind in the back of our minds and enjoyed each other."

And that is exactly what Eau Spa is about. After all, "self indulgence is the only way to obtain what you desire," Bolitho says. "You have to take your time and make it last." ♦

