

Skincare from the source

As a pioneer of marine skincare, Phytomer represents a story of three impassioned generations and a dedication to cultivating the purest sea ingredients from the northern French coast

The story of Phytomer – a leading global marine skincare brand for spas, salons and resorts – started with the vision of one individual from the picturesque French seaside town of St Malo in Brittany.

In the 1970s, Jean Gedouin was already a successful import/export entrepreneur. However, when he started to suffer from recurring gout he instinctively turned to his lifelong passion – the sea – to try to find a cure.

Gedouin self-prescribed himself a daily glass of seawater and before long his ailment had completely disappeared. From then on, he became passionate about harnessing the curative power of the sea and bringing its benefits to others.

His granddaughter, and Phytomer's marketing director Mathilde Gedouin-Lagarde explains: "Growing up in St Malo, my grandfather was always passionate about the sea. He was also an innovator and a visionary and set his sights on

capturing the remarkable properties of the sea and applying it to skincare – at a time when no-one had begun to do this."

She continues: "The sea is the origin of all life, the most vital element on earth, and a source of unparalleled biodiversity. It enjoys a unique affinity with our cells, containing all the elements that are essential to our skin's health and beauty."

Gedouin started to gather seaweed from the Brittany coast and to freeze-dry seawater into a powerful mineral concentrate. This process led to the development of his first product – Oligomer® – and the birth of his skincare company Phytomer.

"Oligomer® is still one of our flagship products. In the form of a bath powder it helps to combat fatigue and to relieve tension. We've also included it in all our products for its exceptional remineralising properties," says Mathilde.



Phytomer's story began and continues in St Malo (above); Oligomer® is used in all products (left)



“My grandfather believed that everybody should have the chance to experience the invigorating properties of the sea, wherever they lived”

Taking the sea to the city

At that time in France, thalassotherapy centres were just beginning to take off but beyond bathing in seawater, there were few treatments on offer. Gedouin started to work with these facilities to develop their treatment offers, while at the same time expanding the Phytomer product range.

Mathilde continues: "My grandfather believed that everybody should have the chance to experience the invigorating properties of the sea, wherever they lived. So with Phytomer, he took the sea to the city."

With the prospect of global expansion on the horizon, it was time for another family member to enter the business – Mathilde's father, Antoine Gedouin.

She says: "My father had a PhD in finance, but he also had a great passion for science and shared his father's passion for the sea.



Phytomer has been leading the way in marine skincare for almost 50 years

"He could see the future for marine cosmetics, and wanted Phytomer to be able to create its own active ingredients here at the source."

So at the start of the 21st Century, Phytomer became a pioneer in marine biotechnologies as the family, guided by the vision of Antoine, invested heavily in research and the development of its own dedicated laboratories.

The facility draws on the unique marine habitat that exists in Brittany, using its diverse ecosystem of seaweed, algae and sea micro-organisms in a sustainable way to form the basis of Phytomer's ingredients.

Unlimited potential

To date, the company's growing research team has identified around 800 micro-organisms that can each produce a unique marine sugar, and has patented 30 of them for future developments.

"The sea's potential is limitless. We've really only discovered around 10 per cent of its properties and how we can truly benefit from them," says Mathilde.

In addition to investing in biotechnology, Antoine's goal was also to turn Phytomer into a global brand. He started with Japan and the US and 30 years later, Phytomer's 200-plus products and treatment protocols are available in more than 70 countries.

The company's classic 20-year-old products like Rosée Visage (a mix of aromatics, sea plants and rose water) remain just as popular as its cutting edge creations, like Pionnière XMF – a cream launched in 2012 which contains a biotechnological marine sugar formulated to visibly smooth out wrinkles in an hour.

"Whenever we launch into a new market, Rosée Visage always quickly becomes a bestseller. It's a timeless, versatile skincare product that cleanses, tones and removes make-up all in one. People absolutely love it," says Mathilde.

Representing the third generation, Mathilde focuses on marketing and development, and building strategies for the future. She says: "We wish to inspire every single one of our customers to reveal and rejuvenate their authentic, natural beauty."

Family values

And so the story of one man, now in his 80s, became the success story of three generations. The landscape of the Phytomer business may have changed since its inception, but its core vision remains.

Mathilde says: "We've grown Phytomer into one of the most advanced marine skincare brands in the world, but our family



Antoine Gedouin has invested heavily in R&D and turned Phytomer into a global brand

never lost sight of my grandfather's vision. Quite simply, he wanted the application of Phytomer products and treatments to feel as healing as a swim in the ocean, and as invigorating as a fresh sea breeze, producing the same lively glow on your skin."

"Half a century ago, Jean Gedouin was the visionary who turned the sea into skincare and with all that we've created from our base in St Malo, we're excited about what the next 50 years will bring." ●

PHYTOMER

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Pionnière XMF is Phytomer's next generation range of skincare products

