

ORGANIC TANNING

SPRAY AT HOME

Paramus native Tracy Gough takes her organic spray tans on the road

WRITTEN BY JORAM MUSHINSKE PHOTOGRAPHY BY MITSU YASUKAWA

Paramus native Tracy Gough, 28, was tired of terrible-looking tans.

She grew up as a “bed tanner” and worked at tanning salons, mostly for the perks — free tans. At age 19, however, a trip to the doctor changed her routine.

“A dermatologist had to remove and test a small area of my back, which was a huge wake-up call that it’s never too early to begin taking care of your skin and body,” Gough says. “I quit the tanning beds and began getting airbrushed (spray-tanned) myself, but I’m a very pale person and no colors ever looked good on me no matter what shade it was.”

Around the same time, Gough began to feel lost in her everyday routine. “I was attending college while working two jobs, and wanted to become a criminal psychologist,” she says. “All of my friends were away at college, joining sororities and making new friends. I became a little depressed feeling like I really didn’t have a place.”

During a camping trip, Gough had the idea to start her own company, and the next day she had it all down on paper. “I wanted to take the stigma out of spray tans and appeal to men and women of all ages and tastes,” she says. “Forget the techno music, the Jersey Shore jokes and the ridiculous-looking dark colors.”

“I never imagined in my wildest dreams I would become a business owner,” she says. “I’m very fortunate to have an amazing support system of family, friends and clients.”

PALE IN COMPARISON
Gough started her mobile tanning company, After Dark, when she was 20 years old.



HOME COURTESY OF TRACY GOUGH

“OUR BIGGEST COMPLIMENT IS WHEN CLIENTS SAY, ‘NO ONE COULD BELIEVE IT WAS A SPRAY TAN!’”

TRACY GOUGH

Gough’s initial vision included owning multiple locations of After Dark Organic Airbrush Tanning salons, but funding was an issue. “Banks don’t typically like to hand over loans to a 20-year-old with no business experience,” she says. Then she came up with the idea of making her business mobile. It took two years before she fully embraced the concept; four years into running After Dark, she committed herself to making her business strictly mobile and expanding its service areas.

Along the way, Gough made another important decision. “I finally figured out that any airbrush solution purchased wholesale wasn’t going to do the trick,” she says. “I had to be innovative if I wanted the perfect color and to achieve the best techniques.”

Gough was originally trained while working for a major tanning company at the start of her career. “When I created After Dark, I wanted to take the extra measures in getting certified completely,” she says. “I’ve done training classes through high-end tanning companies like Norvell and Aviva, while still doing personal research on all the latest trends in the airbrush tanning world.”

AN ORGANIC ALTERNATIVE

It is no secret that spending hours in the sun or a tanning bed is not the best thing for your skin. “I think people really started to detour from tanning beds and the sun after the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services issued a surgeon general’s warning call of action on skin cancer,” Gough says. “It stated that skin cancer was on the rise and that it could be attributed to the estimated rise in indoor tanning.”

Gough says that with After Dark, she is able to provide a safe, organic alternative. “Our mixtures are made up of water, sugar/sugar cane, green tea extract, Vitamin E, wheat, oat, soy, some herbs and aloe, along with perfumes to help coat the smell,” she says.

After Dark also can customize its services to each client’s needs. “Since we’re mixing the color on location, our artists are well aware of how the client’s

skin will react and look once the airbrush tan is applied,” Gough says. “I myself have very sensitive skin and a lot of allergies, so I was very picky when searching and creating my solution.”

Before any solution is applied, the client must also sign a waiver listing any medical conditions, allergies or illnesses. “Most people will notify us in advance if they have severe allergies or skin conditions,” she says. “If someone has a lot of allergies, we may recommend a skin test, where one of our artists will come and dab a small section of an ankle or wrist with the solution to see if there is any reaction before proceeding with a full body tan.”

“I’m proud to say that After Dark has never had any complaints of adverse skin reactions to our airbrush solution,” says Gough.

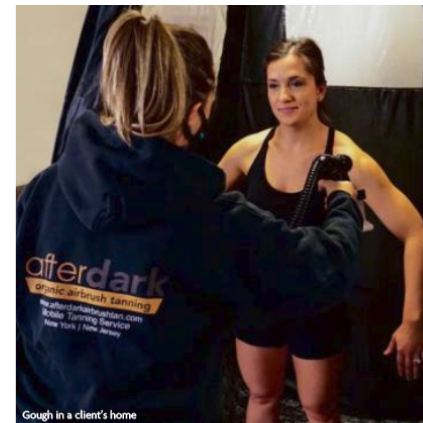
THE PROCESS

“We have our basic colors — light, medium or dark — but we won’t mix the solution until we are on location and can analyze the client’s skin tone,” says Gough. “Our artists not only mix the color, but explain how and why we’re mixing the tones to help the client understand the process.”

After Dark keeps clients’ information on file, so any artist coming to an appointment can use the same color, or easily tone it up or down. The airbrush is available in full- or half-body.

Preparing for an airbrush tan is a lot simpler than most people assume. “Exfoliating is the most important thing to do before your tan,” Gough says. “When you exfoliate, you’re removing dead skin and preparing a fresh new layer that helps the airbrush be absorbed evenly. This also makes it last longer and fade much more naturally.”

Gough also notes that waxing, facials and other skin or body treatments should



Gough in a client's home

be done 48 hours before the tan, and that no lotions or moisturizers should be applied beforehand, as this can block the solution from being absorbed fully.

She says After Dark tans last up to 10 days if taken care of properly, with the color most vivid the first four days. She recommends making an appointment a day or two before a big event or vacation.

“Clients initially schedule through our website or email, since there is a lot of information we need to obtain,” she says. “During the booking, we ask all clients to review our process page to know how to prepare for their tan, what to expect during the appointment and how to keep it lasting afterwards. We are usually in and out in about 30 minutes or less.”

“After eight hours, you can hop in the shower, rinse off the residue and go back to doing what you normally do,” Gough says. “You can work out, relax in a hot tub, go to the beach — whatever you desire.”

FUTURE PLANS

“Right now, we’re in the beginning stages of starting our product line,” Gough says. “We are starting off with a body scrub, a body wash, and a body lotion — which of course will be all-natural.”

“We are also planning our self-tanners and tan extenders, which will come a little while later, but will be well worth the wait,” she adds. “I don’t think we will be seeing any store locations anytime soon, but who knows? The sky is certainly the limit!” ♦