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Waxing too painful? Try threading, an Indian art of hair removal that's sweeping the hip salons

By Leela de Kretser

Josie Carbone used to travel from salon to salon in Manhattan looking for the perfect wax for her bushy brows.

She had long given up on plucking with sharp tweezers and had yet to find a beautician whose technique could lure her return business.

Then Carbone, 31, heard from a friend about the ancient south Asian method of hair removal called threading.

"All my friends in the city get threading done," Carbone said, sporting perfectly shaped eyebrows after a recent appointment. "Most of those who did waxing have now switched."

Bollywood brows have overtaken Brazilian bikini lines as the hottest depilatory fad. What once was relegated to the back rooms of immigrant women's houses in Indian enclaves around the country is now a major drawing card for high-end spas and salons around the country.

A beautician holds the end of a thread in her mouth and then uses both hands to make it taut. She quickly winds the strand around individual hairs, like a lasso, twisting and pulling them out of their follicles by the root.

Beauty therapists say the technique, which is usually used on the face, rather than the more delicate nether parts, is less painful, more precise and more natural than waxing. Threading is quicker and less likely to irritate the skin.

It is also a relatively inexpensive hair removal method, with prices around the country ranging from \$5 to \$15 for the upper lip and eyebrows.

Shobha Tummala, who has salons in trendy SoHo and the Upper East Side of Manhattan, has built a business around the treatment.

Tummala, of Indian descent, said she came up with the idea of turning threading into a high-end beauty treatment when she noticed that her Western friends loved the technique but were reluctant to patronize the small shops in Indian neighborhoods that performed the treatment.

"When I first started in this business about four years ago, nobody had heard of the word threading," Tummala said. "In the last year and a half, everybody at least knows it exists. Then more recently people have at least tried it once."

Threading's evolution from ethnic to hip status is being replicated around the country. The Spa Index Web site lists salons with threading in almost every state.

Celebrities reported to have regular threading appointments include Brad Pitt, Glen Close, Reese Witherspoon, Liz Hurley, Heather Graham, Cher and Selma

[High resolution photos and text-only](#)



Soma Chakroborty, 31, uses thread to remove clients' facial hair at Shobha Salon in Manhattan. (Pearl Gabel/CNS)



Jennifer Shaw is threaded at Shobha Salon in Manhattan. This is the second time that Shaw, 29, has been threaded, which she describes as "much better than tweezing." (Pearl Gabel/CNS)



Soma Chakroborty, 31, threads the eyebrows of Jennifer Shaw, 29, at Shobha Salon in Manhattan. Chakroborty, who is originally from India, has been threading for three years. (Pearl Gabel/CNS)