

Face Time: Shobha Tummala

BY JENNIFER BARGER June 21 at 2:47 pm

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Can hair removal be glamorous or, dare we say it, fun? Those are the goals of smooth operator Shobha Tummala, who launched a chic chain of waxing/threading/sugaring salons in New York in 2001. The now Potomac, Md.-based Tummala opens D.C.'s first Shobha (1730 M St. NW; 202-912-8455) on Wednesday. We caught up with her about secrets of going bare here, there and everywhere.

Shobha removes customers' hair with wax, sugar or via threading. Which method hurts the least?
Some people don't have an opinion on this. But we only do threading on the face, since many people find it less painful.



Some people aren't familiar with threading — can you explain it?
A piece of thread is twisted and pulled along areas of unwanted hair, like a mini-lasso. Then the technician lifts the hair follicle directly from the root. It's been happening for centuries.
But waxing isn't for sissies? Sugaring is definitely gentler. It pulls on the skin less. Men often prefer it.

Are men shy about hair removal?
The toughest part of the experience for them is just walking into a salon. For women, it's common, but for them, it's not the first thing they think about. Some of them aren't conscious of how hairy they are.

Any good tips for hair-removal newbies?
Take ibuprofen beforehand. It reduces any sort of reaction. And try to be as relaxed as possible. Some people even say to have a drink or two [laughs].

Is what you do after hair removal important, too?
Yes! Don't steam, sauna or have sex right after a bikini wax. You've opened up your pores and don't want to risk inflammation. Use cortisone cream if you need it.

Which are the most popular areas to strip of hair?
Brows and bikinis are neck and neck.

Are there any trends in hair removal?
In the 13 years I've been in business, I've seen brows go all over the place. But I feel like right now, it's about full brows, like Brooke Shields. But not everyone can do that, and we try to focus on the individual, what would look good on them and what they can achieve.

Is there a celebrity with perfect brows?
We're always talking about that, but it's not like you can bring in a photo and say, "I need these brows." But the most requested brows are Beyonce, Kim Kardashian, Mila Kunis and Minka Kelly.

I hear the atmosphere at the salon is funky and colorful.
Yeah, I feel like a lot of salons are sterile. Our spaces are bright and we put on funky music. Sometimes people hang out after their service!