

ASK SOMEONE five years ago to describe “clean” and they’d refer to that squeaky sensation after washing with soap. Today clean is a way of life. (See: the cultural phenomenon that is Gwyneth Paltrow’s Goop.) And following the organic food movement, in which offerings swelled from artisanal goods at farmers’ markets to mass-grocery-chain staples, clean beauty is having a moment. But along the way there’s been a lot of confusion about what clean serums and salves actually are. Bolstered by consumer demand, safe ingredients, transparency in sourcing, and efficacious formulas are table stakes now, with sustainable packaging and more inclusive options on the horizon. Here, a primer on building your clean vanity.

**DEFINING CLEAN** “I go back to opening my natural and organic store in Brooklyn 10 years ago,” says Shen Beauty founder Jessica Richards. “The definition [of clean] was a bit clearer then because we didn’t have the larger brands encroaching on the topic.” Simple—you had natural and not natural. Now where an ingredient or formula falls on the safety spectrum is up for debate: The European Union bans or restricts more than 1,300 ingredients; the FDA, which has regulations governing personal care products that have been largely unchanged since 1938, lists just 11. That’s where independent sources are filling the gap. Clean beauty retailer Credo offers the Dirty List, which contains more than 2,700 no-go ingredients and is considered an industry standard; Environmental Working Group, a nonprofit consumer watchdog based in Washington, D.C., counts approximately 3,000. EWG also maintains an online database called Skin Deep, where more than 88,000 personal care and beauty products are rated from 1 (good) to 10 (bad), depending on the hazards associated with their ingredients. “The team of scientists here pore over scientific literature, international determinations, and studies on these chemicals, and that’s what contributes to the product scores,” says Nneka Leiba, vice president of EWG’s healthy living science program.

**PUSHING SUSTAINABILITY** Ingredients are a place to start, but it doesn’t end there. Products should also be made with clean manufacturing processes. “It means there’s an audit of all raw material suppliers for harmful or toxic substances because just saying



**EleVen by Venus Williams** Unrivaled Sun Serum, \$50



**Biossance** Squalane + Rose Vegan Lip Balm, \$18



**May Lindstrom Skin** The Blue Cocoon Beauty Balm Concentrate, \$180

it’s a plant doesn’t mean it’s safe,” says Barbara Paldus, founder and CEO of Codex Beauty and a longtime biotechnology entrepreneur. “If it was grown in a field where there’s a lot of heavy metal, that poor plant is going to be full of things like mercury.” Some brands are also expanding their definition of clean to include sustainability, covering post-consumer and ocean plastic for packaging and compostable materials for shipping. “Everything from the way ingredients are sourced to the primary and secondary packaging should be sustainable,” says Catherine Gore, president of clean skin-care brand Biossance, which bans 2,000-plus ingredients from its formulations.

**INCREASING INCLUSIVITY** While the clean beauty industry has been slower to meet the needs of people of color, recent innovations are showing promise. Annie Jackson, a cofounder and COO of Credo, has been pushing the brands she carries to offer more inclusive makeup shades for the past four years. And now Credo has just launched EleVen by Venus, a sun-care line created by Venus Williams and the Sunscreen Company that contains 25 percent zinc oxide and doesn’t leave skin looking ashy. Meanwhile, clean yet highly pigmented makeup lines that boast diverse complexion ranges (features you couldn’t find together just a few years back) continue to gain popularity: Mented, the Lip Bar, and Inika Organic, to name a few.

**MAKING IT YOURS** Whatever your motivation for cleaning up, the best approach is not to overwhelm. Body care is a great place to start. “I’d look at body products that aren’t rinsed off because the exposure is going to be much greater with a leave-on product, and if you use it over your entire body, there’s more surface area for absorption,” Leiba says. For most people, this means selecting a clean body oil or lotion as well as a body wash. “Then turn to your face and start weeding out your skin-care products,” says Richards. But don’t drive yourself crazy, she adds. “If you stress about it, you’re going to have other effects on your health and your personal well-being in the long term. Just do the best you can while also feeling happy.” ■

# THE FUTURE OF CLEAN BEAUTY

*Once a catchall for all things vaguely natural, “clean beauty” is being redefined to mean safe, sustainable, and inclusive. By Megan Deem*



**Pai** Rosehip BioRegenerate Oil, \$44



**Codex Beauty** Bia Wash Off Cleansing Oil, \$70