

Repechage's Transcontinental Collaboration

THIRTY YEARS AFTER DEVELOPING HER SEAWEED-based spa brand, Repechage, into an international business, Lydia Sarfati is focusing on a new horizon: West Africa.

The president and chief executive officer of the Secaucus, N.J.-based Repechage has collaborated with West African spa pioneer Dzighbordi K. Dosoo to develop a natural-based aromatherapy skin and body care and lifestyle brand called Kanshi, or "sweet smelling" in the Nigerian Hausa language. The distribution strategy is aimed at Ghana and 16 other neighboring countries. Dosoo owns three salons in Ghana, and there are 2,500 in the country. No one has broken out figures, but sources indicate \$1 million in product has been shipped to Africa in the first installment.

Sarfati and Dosoo presented the new brand in Ghana on Monday at a beauty trade show, called the Iyaba '10 Expo, which was held in the capital, Accra. The three-day show, organized by Dosoo, was expected to draw at least 1,500 aestheticians, as well as trade and tourism officials.

The Kanshi range was conceived by Dosoo and Sarfati, and developed and produced by Star Labs LLC, a subsidiary of Sarkli-Repechage for Dosoo's company, Allure Africa Limited. In the presentation Monday, Dosoo was filmed telling the crowd in Accra, "this is something I've been dreaming of for many years, a product that would be made from our own ingredients, not made by a foreigner but made by one of our own. Every time we see products made naturally," she continued, "they are always made by someone else. But today that wall has come down. We are going to change the face of the skin care industry in Africa forever."

Dosoo said six months ago, she complained to her friend Sarfati in New Jersey that every time she returned to Africa, she had to bring the products back with her. "I know I have the ability to conceptualize them," she recalled saying. Sarfati told her to come up with a concept and they would develop it. "Lydia made it happen," Dosoo said, approvingly. After presenting the line, Sarfati described the working relationship, calling Dosoo "my lost African sister."

The brand is designed as a midpriced aromatherapy collection, exuding the natural flavors of Africa with ingredients like papaya, mango, cucumber, coconut, mint, shea butter, witch hazel, lemongrass and green, white and yellow teas.

Dosoo's vision was to create a natural-based line with nourishing and healing benefits. There are 33 stockkeeping units, or 18 products, spread over three collections, consisting of skin care, body care and lifestyle products, such as a mimosa



Dzighbordi K. Dosoo and Lydia Sarfati flank the Kanshi team at the Iyaba '10 expo.

room spray and a mimosa candle. There are products geared for dry and oily skin. Prices range from \$10 to \$30 for 32-oz. professional sizes.

According to the U.S. company, Repechage has a distribution agreement with Dosoo's Allure Africa limited to deliver skin care not only to Africa but also to Gambia, Nigeria, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Cameroun, Togo, Mali, Benin, Senegal, Guinea, Gabon, Burkina Faso, the Ivory Coast, Niger, Chad and Equatorial Guinea.

In a recent interview, Sarfati said the company plans to introduce the line in the U.S. in the fall. "Why not bring it to America?" she asked. "It's about aromatic, beautiful, sexy skin."

Her daughter, Shiri Sarfati, vice president of sales and marketing at the parent Sarkli-Repechage, added, "It's the comfort food of skin care."

She added it's a midpriced "feel-good line not based on clinicals" that could be retailed through salons, spas and even some specialty retailers.

— Pete Born