

Nuala Woulfe uses the word magic a lot. As well she might. Enjoy a day at her spa in Dublin's southside, seaside village of Glasthule and you might as well have spent a week with Merlin, such are the transformative, rejuvenating results.

I entered the Serenity Day Spa feeling very worn out. It had been a difficult week, which started with a houseful of French visitors — they were *tres charmante*, but it's tiring having house guests — and ended with the untimely loss of a friend. So an emotionally battered, physically drained, distinctly un-yummy mummy entrusted herself to the caring hands of Nuala and her terrific team.

You really do leave real life behind and enter another zone. The spa itself is fragrant and calm; an old house, sensitively modernised and furnished. You abandon clothes, handbag, mobile and exhaustion in the changing room and put on a dressing gown. There's a relaxation room where you can put your feet up with the newspapers and you're offered juice or tea. I'm sure they meant the herbal kind, but didn't demur when I requested plain old Indian.

My blissful day started the way I love to end most of my evenings. In a lovely, scented warm bath. This wasn't any bath though. This was a hydrotherapy bath with warm jets and changing colours, infused with a soothing chestnut soak. The pressure exerted by the water jets massages the body through the skin to the jangled nerves beneath, soothing and moisturising. It was the perfect, 20-minute pre-treatment to the deep-tissue massage which followed. The latter was administered by Maria, a lovely Spanish girl with strong hands. A lot of the treatments at Serenity are customised to the specific needs of each person and so Maria spent a lot of time pummelling my beleaguered back into something more human.

And thence to the highlight of the day. A facial with Nuala herself. Within seconds, she summed up my skin. And again, she customised the treatment. She asked me what I was hoping for from the treatment. "To look 10 years younger", seemed the obvious objective.

I've no interest — never have had — in

DAY OF HEAVEN

She arrived emotionally battered and exhausted but, as **Madeleine Keane** was to discover, Nuala Woulfe's spa is not only serenity by name, but by nature too, and more than a little bliss rubbed off on her world-weary soul



plastic surgery, Botox, collagen fillers and the like — but I'm all for surgery-free technology. Nuala started with a jet peel which involved a saline solution being sprayed on to my face.

It was a humid day and this was so cooling and refreshing; I could feel it hydrating deep into my epidermis. Then she attached electro-pads to my chest and put on her electro-gloves — known as magic hands — and for what felt like 20 minutes proceeded to massage gel into my face. This treatment, known as New Life, moves the electrical pulse through the nervous system — stimulating cell growth, lifting and firming the skin.

And, my goodness, the result. She put a mirror in my hands: this time 10 years ago I was glowing with pregnancy, and that young expectant mother looked back at me. Magic hands, indeed.

Nuala is also well known as a gifted

reflexologist. By barely touching my feet she was able to tell me to cut down on red meat and dairy products.

She also joined a long line of people who are constantly advising me to unhook, stop racing, take time out.

To this end she also sent me for a session with Dr Raju, the in-house guru. An Indian naturopath and yoga therapy expert, he teaches relaxation techniques and meditation and treated me to an intoxicating head massage and a short but valuable lesson on breathing.

Time, then, for lunch. At the start of the day you order from a simple menu of sandwiches. These come from 64 Wine, the super wine and food emporium down the road, run with style by my old pal Gerard McGuire. I had a ham and Emmental sandwich dressed with rocket and sun-dried tomatoes.

And it was a very pleasant finale to sit

in the sunny mezzanine and leaf through magazines, enjoying my lunch, while having a pedicure. A delectable combo of a few of my favourite things — reading, eating and being touched.

So, did Nuala succeed in her mission? Serenity restored my sanity and gave me a measure of serenity. And I not only looked 10 years younger — that is, according to family, friends and colleagues — far, far more importantly, I felt 20 years younger.

Now that's what I call magic. ■

Nuala Woulfe Serenity Day Spa, 55 Glasthule Road, Sandycove, Co Dublin, tel: (01) 230-0255, or see www.serenityspa.ie Serenity offers a wide variety of packages. A typical day comprising customised facial, back massage and hand and arm massage or foot massage costs €100 (normally €155)

WIN A PAMPERING DAY FOR TWO AT THE NUALA Woulfe SERENITY DAY SPA

LIFE Magazine, in association with the award-winning Nuala Woulfe Serenity Day Spa, Glasthule, is offering one lucky reader and a guest a Serenity Spa Rejuvenation Package.

Enjoy a total Serenity experience. Your ritual begins with an Ayurvedic consultation with Dr Donn Brennan, followed by a customised body massage. A customised facial will be designed to suit your skin's needs. Complete this day with a spa pedicure. Relax in the tranquil surroundings of the spa and

enjoy a light lunch from 64 Wine, the popular Glasthule wine and food shop.

Serenity was the first spa in the country to receive ISO certification. It also received The Excellence Through People Award.

To be in with a chance to win a stunning spa day for two answer this question:

In which county is Serenity Day Spa located. Is it a) Dublin or b) Donegal?

To enter, text SPA along with your answer and name (e.g. SPA A Mary

Ryan) to 53307 or tel: (1513) 778-089.

Terms and conditions: You must be over 18 to enter. Competition closes at midnight tomorrow. Entries cost 60c including VAT. Calls from mobiles cost more. Network charges may vary. Entries made after the close date will not count, and you may be charged.

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