

Farm-to-spa getaways lure travelers

By **JACOB ADELMAN**
The Associated Press

Visitors have long come to the hilly Southern California hamlet of Ojai to get stuffed with the Pixie tangerines grown as a specialty in the area's citrus groves.

Now they're coming to get scrubbed with them, too.

The Ojai Valley Inn (www.ojairesort.com) and other spas across the country are cashing in on the craze for locally grown fruits and herbs by integrating them into skin treatments and massage therapies.

Customers say they like knowing they're supporting small, local farms and appreciate the freshness of the items used.

"When they put this stuff on, I can smell fresh juice," said Ojai Valley Inn guest Julia Pizzinat, 70, who had the 50-minute, \$145 Pixie Tangerine & Pomegranate Scrub, which uses halved tangerines as applicators for a sugar-based exfoliant. "It's not like something that's been made in Milwaukee and sent out in crates."

Guests' greatest demand used to be for treatments employing exotic ingredients from far-off places, such as heavily perfumed body creams from Europe, spa managers said. But over the past few years, the local food movement firmly entrenched in the nation's pricier restaurants has spread to spas.

Treatments using products from local farms are a niche offering, so their sales haven't been separately tracked. But spa managers say guests are increasingly opting for such luxuries.

Atlanta-based spa consultant Mark Wuttke cautioned, however, that spas using locally grown ingredients risk disappointing guests who expect to get the same services year-round. Most crops grow only part of the year.

Emily Walker, who manages the Spa Hotel Healdsburg (www.hotelhealdsburg.com) in California's Sonoma County, said using local ingredients fits with the ethos already embraced by many wine country visitors.

One of her spa's treatments features a salve of wine and honey from the nearby Quivara Vineyards. Another uses a massage oil made with the same locally grown Meyer lemons found on the spa restaurant's menu.

"We sort of carried it over because the climate here in wine country is farm-to-table," Walker said. "So now it's farm-to-spa."

At Friend's Ranches in Ojai, which began selling Pixie tangerines to the Ojai Valley Inn this spring, the owners were



ADAM LAU / AP

Body technician Bree Sarver demonstrates the Pixie tangerine and pomegranate treatment on Andrea Olson at the Ojai Valley Inn & Spa.

surprised to find their fruit was being used in spa treatments.

"I thought it was kind of silly," said Emily Ayala, who owns the farm with her family. "As a farmer, you're growing food and sometimes you think it's wasteful when people don't use your food to eat. I didn't know that people rub themselves with a tangerine."

But that skepticism turned to delight when online orders for the Pixies spiked.

"It gave us another level of exposure with customers who otherwise might not have tried the tangerine," Ayala said.

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