



Not a Dry Curl in the House When Author Comes to Capella

Curly-hair specialist and author Lorraine Massey offers salon audience members quick conditioning treatments and tells why she shuns shampoo.

By [Jennifer Parratt](#) | [Email the author](#) | March 16, 2011

There wasn't a dry curl in the house at Capella Salon over the weekend when [Lorraine Massey](#), author of the new book *Curly Girl: A Handbook*, showed up to demonstrate techniques from her book, sign copies and give some straight talk about [curly hair](#).

Her message: Curly hair should be conditioned, not straightened with relaxers or flatirons. With a head full of perfectly sculpted, frizz-free blond ringlets, it's clear Massey is an authoritative expert on all things curly.

She took questions at the Studio City shop from an audience of more than 50 women about the elusive nature of curl. As she responded, she called women up one by one and sprayed leave-in conditioner in their hair and worked it through with her fingers to demonstrate how to bring out the shape of a curl with moisture.

Massey's energetic, pro-curl attitude is infectious. As she talked about how important healthy hair is and how dry and damaged straightened hair looks, she held her arms out to the audience to underscore her point.

"Hair is the first thing people see when they look at you," she said emphatically. "Weare our hair."

With her delicate English accent and the gentle manner with which she worked with each audience member's hair, it's easy to forget that Massey is actually quite the mogul. Co-owner of the upscale Devachan Salon and creator of the DevaCurl line of products, Massey's techniques for washing, cutting and styling hair are so effective that salons around the country send their hairdressers to train with her and become certified in the Deva method.

Capella Salon was the first salon on the West Coast to offer the DevaCurl products and method. Owner Shai Amiel had already been using the products on his clients when he met Massey at a Washington, D.C., hair show in 2003. When Massey said she was available to train him and his staff, he didn't hesitate. Amiel said the move made sense, because Capella already specialized in curly hair.

When asked by an audience member why her book makes no mention of the DevaCurl line of products, Massey's response didn't sound like a mogul's. She said she is motivated more by helping women like herself, who for too long had more bad hair days than good, than she is by increasing product sales.

"I don't really like to make the hard sell," she responded. "But the main reason is that I don't want anyone who can't afford to buy my products to think the techniques in the book won't work without them. You can use any products."

Massey's drive comes from her struggles with her own hair. As a child, Massey's mother had a tough time figuring out what to do with her daughter's locks, which made for some traumatic getting-ready-for-school mornings. She told the audience this is one of the main reasons so many women opt for straightening solutions.

"Think about it. How many of you were actually taught how to care for your hair as a child?" Massey asked the audience.

"My mother cut my hair like a boy's," deadpanned Vanessa Arias, 37, of South Pasadena. The room erupted in laughter and some nodded in understanding because their mothers too had been ill equipped to control their curls and resorted to desperate measures.

Adrienne Racine, 30, a Studio City jewelry designer, is biracial, with a white mother who was at a loss when it came to styling Racine's hair.

"As a child my hair was always in braids," said Racine. "Once I was old enough, I started relaxing it."

At 18, Racine started straightening her hair with a flatiron. She did this for eight years until her hair became badly burned and she had to cut it short. Now she sports a goddess-like mane of tiny, dark ringlets.

At her salon, Massey does a lot of interventions to reverse the kind of damage Racine's hair suffered. Hearing hundreds of stories like Racine's is what has made Massey such an anti-straightening advocate. She told the audience about the time she found a flatiron in her curly-headed daughter's room.

"I brought it to her and said, 'We need to have a serious talk.' It was as bad as if I'd found drugs," she joked.

It is modern inventions like irons and blow dryers, which Massey called "blow-fryers," that are responsible for backlash against curls. She pointed out that in the first half of the 20th century, women with curly hair managed to look gorgeous using simple techniques that didn't fry their hair, such as pin curls. Many hairstyles of the time were actually created *for* curly hair, a concept hard to imagine now, when it's possible to flip through an entire magazine and not see one naturally curly style.

Massey said most products made for curly hair are as damaging as the blow-dryers, packed with harsh cleansers and chemicals. The biggest offenders are a group of salt-based cleaning agents called sulfates, which are the first ingredient in almost every shampoo; even the ones that claim to moisturize curly hair.

And here's where Massey gets controversial. Her philosophy of curly hair care is based almost entirely on one rule: Never, ever, shampoo. The squeaky-clean feeling you get when you shampoo isn't your hair at its cleanest, she said; it's your hair at its driest. Sulfates create the lather in shampoo and strip the hair shaft of natural oils, which curly hair already lacks.

Massey says a moisturizing conditioner combined with water and motion of the fingers rubbing the scalp is all that's needed to release dirt from the hair. Conditioner also doubles as a styling product. The human hair shaft is hollow, and when curly hair is dry, it expands into the atmosphere to absorb moisture in the air, she said. This expansion is what causes frizz and an ample amount of conditioner—she suggests not rinsing it—will keep the hair shaft from expanding.

Massey's method, which she calls "no-pooing," has equal numbers of devotees and critics. Women fight her on it daily, she said, and even when she persuades them to try it, they invariably have a comical reaction.

Massey laughs as she tells the audience that women come into her salon and say, 'The no-pooing isn't working, it doesn't clean my hair.' "

"Then, in the next breath, they say, 'But my hair has never looked better,' " she said. They think the no-pooing isn't working because there is no lather, she said, and attribute this to society's obsession with hyper-cleanliness.

At the end of her talk, Massey told the women sitting around Capella Salon that their hair is completely unique to them and it needs to be cared for with that in mind.

"Your hair needs be nourished. I tell women every day, just by not shampooing, dry, frizzy hair will get better," she said.