



TIMOTHY KAPSNER
Senior Research Scientist
Aveda Corporation
www.aveda.com

“We’re always trying to recreate and reinvent even our most established products—to use more sustainable and certified organic ingredients.”

—Tim Kapsner

It’s Not Easy Bein’ Green

When Tim Kapsner was developing children’s personal care products for Minnetonka Inc. in the 1980s—themed after *Sesame Street* characters like Kermit the Frog—he couldn’t have imagined that his introduction to the Muppet known for “Bein’ Green” would bring him full circle more than 20 years later as a senior research scientist for one of the most eco-friendly beauty companies in North America.

Kapsner caught the green thumb in 1993 when he began working for the Aveda Corporation as a formulator at the company’s facility in Blaine, Minnesota, developing the Phomollient and Self Control styling product lines. Now an ingredient developer, Kapsner meets with farmers and suppliers firsthand to find the most sustainable, botanically-based raw material for Aveda’s 600-some products, including professional hair care, skin and body care lines, makeup and fragrances.

“When I came to Aveda, I learned I could be creative and live a vision—that of being more environmentally conscious,” Kapsner says. “We now make all of our products [using] 100% wind energy. We’re trying to move toward more sustainable ingredients, green packaging and green in all aspects of the company.”

For starters, Kapsner has been expanding Aveda’s collection of organic essential oils. With jojoba oil as a staple ingredient in many products, he hopes to focus more fragrances around organic bases. “[Thus far], 90% of the essential oils and 89% of our herbs are organic,” he says.

“Organic” is a term Kapsner does not loosely throw around. His knowledge of organic regulators in the food industry encouraged him to help found similar standards certification committees for the health and beauty industry, including the Organic Trade Association (OTA) and NSF International. He’s also a founding board member of Organic and Sustainable Industry Standards (OASIS). Whereas European organic food regulators such as Ecocert and the Soil Association have developed private cosmetic standards, OASIS is leading the way in launching standards for the U.S. market.

As for the term “natural” in the beauty industry, Kapsner questions the label. “‘Natural’ is completely unregulated and is used, misused and abused by the industry as a whole,” he says. “The sourcing for the ingredient itself is from a plant source, but the specifics aren’t regulated.”

So Kapsner chooses to enhance Aveda products by more organic standards. “We look for materials that have the most sustainable base, so we go to the food industry for vegetable oils, sugars, proteins and those types of things,” Kapsner says.

Professional hair care, specifically, has been a successful sales category for Aveda, and Kapsner sees it as having great growth potential in the global market in upcoming years. However, Aveda is also branching into a new green skin care line, for professional and consumer use, which uses 100% postconsumer packaging. From ingredients to packaging, Aveda’s SKUs uphold sustainability and environmental responsibility.

Kapsner also supports Aveda’s partnerships with organizations such as the Global Greengrants Fund, which donates funds to grassroots environmental organizations in developing countries. He and his co-workers build relationships with indigenous people—Brazilian land owners, for example—helping them sustain their way of life.

Kapsner says he feels blessed that his personal and professional goals to be environmentally conscious go hand in hand. He would agree, in the words of one legendary Jim Henson frog: “It’s not easy being green ... [but] it’ll do fine; it’s beautiful.” ■ **GCI**