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## Kabana products protect skin sans chemicals, preservatives

One-man firm uses seven basic skin-friendly ingredients

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BOULDER - Erik Kreider, biology major at Stanford University, founded Kabana Skin Care LLC to create products with ingredients you don't need to be a scientist to understand.

"My products are rigorously based on the physiology of skin, without synthetic ingredients," he says. "What scares me in the mass market skin-care products, there are maybe 40 ingredients and I recognize maybe two of them. And I am a scientist."

The fact is many of those additions to lotions are added to extend product shelf life and keep it stable for shipping - not for the good of the skin.

And since everything that's applied to the body is absorbed, Kreider thought better to create a line of products that are safe enough to eat (though not intended for consumption). "All our ingredients are edible grade," he says, formulated with the goal of nourishing the skin. "The skin is our largest organ, and we abuse the heck out of it."

Kabana Crème, for instance, is made of seven simple-to-pronounce substances: lanolin, shea butter, cocoa butter, mango butter, Eldorado Springs Artesian water, soy lecithin, and for sun protection, zinc oxide.

This shift to simple and natural was a departure for Kreider. After graduating from Stanford in 1997, the Littleton native worked for five years for a Silicon Valley startup, which developed pharmaceuticals. While assisting on a clinical trial for a new psoriasis drug, Kreider's interest in skin-care products was sparked.

<b>The trial was a bust. </b>

"The placebo, a petrolatum derivative, worked no better than the drug," he said. The moisturizing petrolatum, a petrochemical substance akin to Vaseline, was just as healing as the newfangled pharmaceutical. That idea lit Kreider's entrepreneurial fire. He decided to create a product with the same emollient properties but with natural ingredients.

In 2003 Kreider moved to Boulder, enrolled in the MBA program at the University of Colorado and began work in the lab developing his products. With \$35,000 of his own money, he launched Internet sales of his products in October 2005, and set up shop in an industrial space off Walnut Street in Boulder. He now sells four products: Kabana Crème, Green Screen SPF 15, Liplovers Lip Balm and Sensei UV Soap. He has yet to make a profit, but so far sales have increased each month.

Kabana's products protect skin from the elements and from the number one source of skin damage: the sun. The sun is to blame for skin cancer and premature aging, but sunscreens are an iffy product.

"There is no such thing as a perfect sunscreen, and UV rays are patently dangerous. No one sunscreen is 100 percent effective if you don't use it properly," which means reapplying every couple hours or so, after swimming and after sweating.

Kabana's Green Screen contains many of the same natural ingredients as the crème, along with jojoba oil and vitamin E. Zinc oxide, the FDA-approved broad-spectrum blocker of UVA and UVB rays, is the critical ingredient. Because it is added in nanoized form, it is transparent - not the white-nosed lifeguard look of regular zinc oxide.

The sunscreen provides an SPF of 15, and this sun-protecting factor is another issue that gets Kreider into a lather.

"The higher the SPF, the higher the concentration of synthetics on the skin - without a linear increase in protection," he says. "With higher SPF you get more toxins on the skin, with a fraction of increased protection."

The sun blocking ingredients often used in conventional products are benzene derivatives - nothing you want soaking in long term - or PABA, which is a paraben, an estrogenic substance many prefer to avoid.

Kreider tested an early form of the Green Screen at Burning Man in 2004, the event at which thousands gather on the stark Nevada desert, a brutal environment, for a week of creativity and revelry wearing minimal clothing.

"I set up the Temple of Anointment, and gave out plenty of samples," he said, getting invaluable feedback. He plans to return this year.

He personally tests his products, and his girlfriend and friends use them as well. The cr me is a rich moisturizer ideal for the Colorado climate, he says. And the Sunsei soap contains zinc oxide, depositing on the skin a bit of sun protection while you shower. "It's not a replacement for sunscreen, but it's better than nothing." He also uses it to wash his hair, leaving the skin and hair squeaky clean without any sodium laurel sulfate, a sudsing agent found in conventional soaps and shampoos, which is an irritant and possible carcinogen.

The skin cr me sells for \$6.50 for 2 ounces, \$12 for 4 ounces, \$20 for 8 ounces; sunscreen for \$15; soap for \$6; lip balm for \$5.

Plans for the future include a spray-on sunscreen, but before it can go on the market it must go through government-mandated testing. Kreider also hopes to get the Kabana products into local health food stores, like Whole Foods and Wild Oats.

For now, Fleet Feet Sports and the pro shop at Lakeshore Athletic Club are the only retail outlets stocking the Kabana line.

Says Fleet Street Sports Manager Matt Hill, "I liked Erik's entrepreneurial spirit, and I was enticed because his products are natural. The cr me and the sunscreen are thicker than conventional products, so I tell customers that means you need to use less. And they deteriorate quicker and may separate, but that's because they're natural," he says, due to being formulated without stabilizers or preservatives. "I think he's got cool products."

*Kabana's Skin Care products are available at [www.kabanaskincare.com](http://www.kabanaskincare.com), Fleet Feet Sports and sold each Sunday from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Niwot Farmer's Market in downtown Niwot.*