**The Real Difference Between French and American Beauty**

There’s no denying that French and American women are different when it comes to beauty. And we don’t spend a lot of time trying to pinpoint exactly what that difference is about. What distinguishes our cultural approach to beauty from that of our friends overseas? How do French women always look so—here comes that buzz word—*effortlessly* cool? Pretty and polished yet simultaneously laid-back and undone. As elegant as a ballerina, with the badass attitude of an indie rocker.

Well, the subject of much discussion has finally been explained by the impossibly chic (fashionable) founder of iconic French beauty brand [Caudalie](http://bit.ly/1H1FEJ2" \t "_blank" \o "Caudalie), Mathilde Thomas. Thomas is the quintessential (best example; most important) representation of French hip (very cool)—utterly ageless, classy, and cool—and in her new book out this July, *The French Beauty Solution*, she breaks down (explains) the real difference between French and American beauty.

So what’s the key to French beauty? Mathilde Thomas says it’s the belief that “beauty is something to give you *pleasure*. Because when you feel good, you look good.” It was when she moved from France to New York City in 2010 to grow her brand stateside (in/to America), and traveled all over the country from Ohio to Florida meeting customers, that she realized the American concept of beauty had more to do with pain than pleasure.

She spoke to hundreds of women at all of the beauty stores that carry [Caudalie](http://bit.ly/1H1FEJ2" \t "_blank" \o "Caudalie), from [Sephora](http://bit.ly/Sa2xYk" \t "_blank" \o "Sephora) to [Bluemercury](http://www.bluemercury.com/" \t "_blank" \o "Bluemercury), and said many of the women confessed to making their beauty choices based on “the erroneous (no logic) notion of **no pain/no gain**,” which Thomas calls a deeply American concept. “They’d tell me about crash diets that left them light-headed and skincare products that irritate (bother) their skin—because they felt they had to suffer to be beautiful,” she says, noting that the French notion of beauty is “quite the opposite. The notion of beauty should be, well, *beautiful* and pleasing to you above all.”

After 20 years studying health, wellness, and beauty and several years spent assimilating into American beauty culture, Thomas concluded that this was the biggest difference between the American and French approaches to beauty solutions. And it’s her French heritage (history & culture) and approach to beauty that inspired her to write her book for all the American women wanting what, yes, the French seem to do better.

“The same issues came up time and again (over and over; repeated) as the women I met with [in America] candidly discussed their beauty needs and desires. All my customers wanted the same thing: To have wonderful skin, simply and quickly. To age with **grace**. To lead a healthy lifestyle. To be fit and trim. To know which diets work and which don’t. To know how to do a cleanse if they need. To manage their stress. To have a flawlessly made-up face and a doable hairstyle. And to have the kind of effortless beauty and sense of savoir faire (competence = knowledge & ability) that seem to be part of a French woman’s DNA,” she says.

“The more I talked to consumers, the more easily I could clarify what precisely differentiated the French beauty philosophies and habits from the American ones.” Pleasure versus pain being the biggest, but second in line was the difference between long-term upkeep and quick fixes. “For the French, our beauty routine is predicated on prevention and upkeep (maintenance) and is regarded as an essential, ongoing investment. What I saw here [in America], however, was much more of a tendency toward the quick solution. … And while millions of American women consider beauty a priority in their daily routine, many of their habits are either too complicated, too expensive, too painful, or simply not effective,” she says in the book.

Thomas also clarifies (makes clear) what you might be thinking, which is that different doesn’t necessarily mean one is better than the other. But she believes the differences she noticed between the two approaches to beauty caused the dissatisfaction among the American women she spoke to. As a French beauty mogul (business expert) entering the American beauty landscape, she consistently and unsurprisingly heard the same questions over and over: “How do you do it? How can I be more like the French?” And with that, you have her answer: a more pleasurable, less complicated, less quick-fix approach to beauty.