

San Diego Woman Magazine

AMY HABER

SVP Sales and
Education Senté

Leading with Love

Photo By



Mindy Nguyen

Healthy Hair, Healthy Color

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Photos by Duane Chevalier/Duane's Photography

I recently sat down with Mindy Nguyen to learn about her local hair salon, and the unique chemical-free hair color service she is offering.

In 1975 the North Vietnamese Communist Army defeated the South Vietnamese Army and its American allies. As they invaded Saigon, the country fell into chaos and violence, and South Vietnamese civilians were targeted by the North. Mindy Nguyen's family fled the city and managed to make their way to the seaside town of Vung Tau. By sheer luck, or some divine intervention, they escaped on an overcrowded fishing boat. Mindy had just turned seven. She remembers hearing gunshots on the streets behind them as they boarded amid the turmoil and mass exodus.

It would be more than a year, and numerous stops, before the family would arrive in the United States, sponsored by a church in Nebraska. None of them spoke English. But they had already beaten the hardest odds of their journey, escaping a war-torn country halfway around the world. Together, they set their resolve to make it in this new country, this new home. The family's path in America took them to several different cities, and by the time Mindy was in high school, she was living in San Diego.

Those trying early childhood experiences of fleeing her home under threat of violence, and landing in a completely foreign nation, helped forge in Mindy a resilient, courageous, and ambitious spirit. In her

junior year in high school, she studied cosmetology at a beauty college through an Occupational Program. Before earning her diploma she had already received her cosmetology license and was working in a family salon as she graduated high school.

During the early years of her career, the world was becoming more and more aware of the importance of natural and organic products. But most of the focus was on the food industry, and little attention was paid to the beauty industry. Mindy had been busy building a successful reputation and a loyal clientele. But as the years went by, she became highly sensitive to the harsh chemicals and fumes. She began researching healthier hair color, and it was then that she discovered the potentially harmful effects of the chemicals in hair color and beauty products. She came to realize that if she wanted to continue in this field, she had to find an alternative way - an organic, non-toxic approach to hair color. She needed to bring the organic awareness that had been building elsewhere into her salon. Both for her own health, and that of her clients.

It took a long time for her to find these alternative products. The organic movement was slow to take hold in the beauty industry compared to food, and availability was limited. As she noted in our interview, "When I first started it was very difficult

to find organic products. I tried different lines and different processes. Eventually, I found a few products that were made with mostly organic ingredients. Not 100%, but still much better than the toxic chemicals that are so widely used in the beauty industry, even today."

She offered these products to her clients and noticed positive results. But other stylists were hesitant to follow her lead. So while she had improved her own area, she was still working inside a salon permeated with fumes from hair color, nail polish, polish remover, and other harsh chemicals. She decided that the only way to create a toxic free workspace was to open her own salon. Which she did, in 2005, christening it "MAI Blossom", an eco-wellness salon.



Many of her clients followed her to the new location. Over the years, largely through word-of-mouth, the salon grew, became successful, and continues to thrive today. It's a clean environment, with a tranquil feel, and free from any of the usual strong

salon odors. It is noticeably non-toxic, and a breath of fresh air. Literally.

But then, around 2015, she began to experience hair loss. Unable to pinpoint the cause by her doctor, she decided to try detoxing. "I made a decision that I would try to completely detox from all chemicals, both from food and the products I was using. I even stopped coloring my hair." The problem with cutting out her hair color was that she also had some gray hair. She didn't want to go gray.

So Mindy began to research again. This time looking for a hair color that would be 100% free of chemicals. And again, it took some time, but she eventually did discover something new. Ironically it was also something old, a hair coloring process that has been in use for thousands of years. This ancient process comes purely from plants. "The more I studied it the more excited I became. I find it amazing that hair color can be achieved purely from plants, yield beautiful results, and provide such great health benefits to hair and scalp. This was a whole new way of doing things, and it seemed to have great promise."

She began testing a variety of combinations, in different amounts, to see what colors would be produced. She (and some willing and enthusiastic clients) were her guinea pigs. She continued to scour for information, which turned out to be very limited, trying to learn as much as she could. It did not come easy, but she did find resources that helped her understand the processes, methods, and formulations.

As she fine-tuned her color formulas, she also began adding various nutrients, which support the health of hair and scalp. Her product has become a hair and scalp treatment that colors the hair. "I added nutrients, and supplements, because of my own experience with hair loss. I wanted to create beautiful colors, but also turn it into a beneficial treatment for hair and scalp". Mindy lives a healthy and holistic lifestyle, and she was able to add her knowledge from that to help create this healthful, nutrient-dense hair color. "This product is so different. It is really a hair coloring treatment mask."

"When you put chemicals on your skin and scalp, they are all absorbed into the bloodstream. The plant-based hair color has no chemicals, it's not made in a lab. It comes straight from plants."

Some of her supplemental ingredients help with detox and balancing, and some promote hair growth. "My clients love the fact that it contains zero chemicals, covers their gray, and is completely pure. Some have noticed that their hair is not as gray as before. It promotes a healthy scalp, improves the texture, protects and thickens the hair, and leaves the client with a vibrant look."

This organic hair color only produces natural colors. So the trendy pink, blue,



and purple hair cannot be achieved. Also, this will not lighten hair color. However, for people who want highlights, Mindy has developed a technique to utilize a client's existing natural gray hair, to create highlights. The results are beautiful and natural.

As for how long it lasts compared to chemical dyes, I asked if her clients needed to visit the salon more often. "No, not at all. In fact, it's the opposite. Traditional hair color dissolves the hair cuticle, damaging it and causing the artificial pigment to fade faster. Our pure-plant hair color doesn't do that, it binds to the cuticle. It doesn't strip the hair. Basically, it adds a protective layer to the hair, which makes the color lasts longer."

With such a revolutionary process compared to the status quo, I was curious what her clients thought when she first started offering this product. "They loved it. They couldn't believe how we could produce such amazing results without the use of chemicals. After they had their hair processed the first time, they would often comment on how much healthier, or thicker,

their hair felt, or that it looked better than it had in a long time. All in all, it's been a very unanimous, positive reaction, and even I'm still sometimes amazed at the results we're getting."

And naturally, another benefit of her hair color is that it is better for the environment. "For people who are concerned about our environment, if they're using chemical hair colors, they need to realize that these harmful chemicals are being washed down the drain when they rinse out their hair. Our pure-plant hair color has zero chemicals. Washing it down the drain does not cause any negative effects to the environment."

When we were wrapping up Mindy asked me to consider just how many different chemicals we put into our bodies every day. I wasn't really sure. "The average woman uses over a hundred different chemicals every day." I guess that's not surprising when you think about it. Just take a look at the number of ingredients contained in your shampoos, conditioners, deodorants, makeup, body lotions, hair color, and processed food. Just think about how many times over her lifetime a woman might color her hair.

Her point was well taken. It seems a monumental task to try and avoid chemicals in our everyday modern lives. At least when it comes to hair color, there is now a healthy alternative. This could be the answer you are looking for if you have allergies to traditional hair colors, or if you have health issues that may put you at risk by using toxic chemicals, or if you are pregnant, or a cancer survivor, or if you simply want the benefit of a fully chemical-free organic product. You no longer have to sacrifice your health or the health of our planet.

When Mindy chose the name of her salon, she chose the word MAI because, in Vietnamese, the MAI Blossom flower represents beauty, purity, and longevity. These goals are the guiding principles of MAI Blossom Organic Salon.

MAI Blossom Organic Salon is located in Point Loma. They offer haircuts, styling, and their incredible Fully Organic Chemical-Free Hair Color. Mindy is available by appointment. You can contact her at 619-222-1000 or by email at mindy@maiblossom.com. Visit their site at maiblossom.com