

Susan Langenhennig *The Times-Picayune*

FROM OUR ADVERTISERS

- About The Author
- RSS

Latest Posts

- A down economy is forcing women to adjust -- but not abandon -- their beauty regimens
- New Orleans resident Rose Perrilloux-Patel is hoping that her Pantene ads lead to a dream career in modeling.
- Local sweater designer weaves her way into national spotlight
- LSU perfume will offer a whiff of college memories -- for \$60 a bottle
- Rwandan baskets help heal a nation's wounds

Categories

- Essencefest (RSS)
- Hurricane (RSS)
- Jazzfeset (RSS)
- Living: Fashion (RSS)

Favorite Links

Archived Posts

A down economy is forcing women to adjust -- but not abandon -- their beauty regimens

Posted by [Susan Langenhennig](#), Fashion writer, *The Times-Picayune* December 29, 2008 5:00AM

Categories: [Living: Fashion](#)

Faced with a shrinking family budget, Emily Fournier decided to try a dramatic cost-cutting measure: She colored her blonde hair chocolate brown.

It wasn't so much a stylistic decision as a pecuniary one. The darker color would cost pennies to maintain by comparison.

"I've been a blonde my whole life," the 39-year-old New Orleans attorney said, "but as I've gotten older, I've needed highlights. I thought, I'm going darker so I don't have the up-keep of roots. It's just too expensive."

But then came the reality check. Standing in line at the bank, she'd glance in the security mirror and not recognize herself. Her three sons, all of whom are fair haired, no longer resembled her.

The new hue also had a more subliminal effect. "I just didn't feel like myself," Fournier said. "I was less confident."

"The color didn't suit my skin tone. People thought I looked sick or tired. I thought, budget or no budget, give me back my natural look."

About three months after becoming a brunette, Fournier was back in the chair of her Paris Parker Aveda colorist Garland Tullos, this time going a more subtle blonde.

It was then she discovered another side effect of the spiraling economy. "This wonderful financial crisis has turned me gray," she said, laughing. "Garland found gray hair. I'm too young for that."

Call it beauty and this bust. Dwindling 401k balances and fear of a long, deep depression of the 1930s variety have sparked a new austerity trend in beauty regimens, even among women who haven't lost their jobs or had a dramatic drop in income.

While most aren't yet willing to go au naturale, they're taking a long hard look at what's essential and what's excessive.

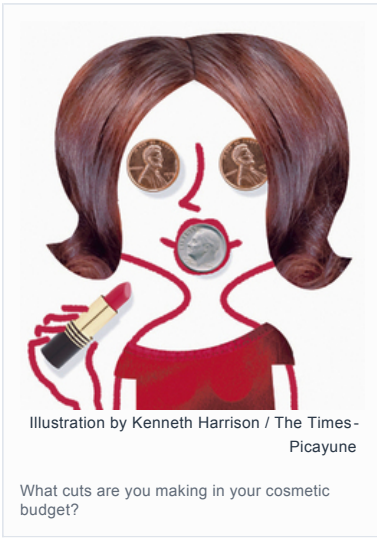
Carolyn Hennesy has developed a pared-down approach. She used to get her hair cut every eight weeks. "And that was two weeks longer than my hairdresser prescribed," said the 36-year-old resident of Old Metairie.

Now she's going even further. "I get color every six weeks, but don't cut until 12 weeks or longer. I'm growing it out, and trying to make it long and fuss-free."

Hennesy spends \$50 on cut and \$50 on color, plus a 20 percent tip. So the savings are real.

She's also trying the do-it-yourself approach to pedicures and considering switching from her favorite Kieh's lotions from the department store to more affordable Olay from the drugstore.

Then there are massages. When she's craving a back rub, Hennesy goes to the dollar-a-minute chair at Whole Foods, instead of a spa.



Like many locals, her budget reckoning really began after Hurricane Katrina. The recession only has made her more vigilant.

"The media has been pounding on the American public to get out of debt," Hennesy said. "Then the economy tanks, and so we pull back, and this is one way to do it."

Keeping her wallet full feels good, but it does have a drawback. Her reduced salon visits mean less money for her stylist at Salon Tereska in Metairie, where Hennesy has been getting her hair done for more than 10 years.

"I do feel bad about it," she said. "I wish I could get a lot more done. But right now, I'm definitely watching what I spend."

Locally, many stylists say they're not yet feeling snipped, though many are bracing for the economic impact after the holidays.

Charlotte Williamson, a salon owner on Magazine Street, said her clients so far have remained consistent.

"They may be cutting back but definitely not on their hair," she said as she painted highlights onto a customer's head. "They may be stretching (their appointments) out a week or so, but they're not giving it up."

Though his chair, too, has remained filled, stylist Tommy Centanni said everyone who sits down is talking about the economy.

At the Paris Parker Aveda salon in Canal Place, Centanni's male clients especially are asking for closer trims to extend the shelf-life of their cut.

At Paris Parker's 11 salons and spas, hair and nail services are up 1 to 2 percent from the prior year. On its face, that seems great, considering the economy.

"Now for some reality. What this industry has continually seen has been 20 to 25 to, at times, 30 percent above prior year in overall sales revenue," said Sharilyn Abbajay, executive vice president of Hammond-based Neill Corp., owner of Paris Parker.

"We still have a strong hair and nail business. Hair is a necessity. They'll skip the Starbucks but get their hair done."

But massages, facials and products aren't considered such essentials.

"Our spa business has slowed down considerably," said Abbajay, who serves on the board of the International Spa Association. "We're about 5 or 6 percent down from prior year. And that's what we're seeing throughout the industry."

Perhaps paradoxically, waxing services are up 22 percent. "It's the price point, and it's considered a necessity," Abbajay said.

Inexpensive services also are a way to give a client an affordable beauty fix. "We have a Green Science Peel. It's a 30-minute facial, to cleanse, peel and moisturize, and it looks like you've had a two-hour service," she said. "It's really great."

Salons and spas aren't the only part of the beauty industry worried about a slow down.

Sales of prestige makeup – specifically products sold at department stores – are down 2 percent, falling from \$2.47 billion from January through September 2007 to \$2.3 billion for the same period this year, said Karen Grant of the NPD Market Group, a consumer and retail market research firm.

The drop is unusual. "Beauty has withstood most of the recessionary trends in the past," Grant said.

The numbers, at least for now, contradict the theory that women buy more lipstick during tough times to satisfy those spending and primping urges.

Holli Gaspard, co-owner of H2O salons and day spas in Metairie and Mandeville, gathered her staff recently to discuss the economic downturn, even though the appointment books remain full.

"Times are rough, so you can offer options," she said. "Instead of highlighting your whole head, let's do a personalized (less expensive) service just around your face. And we know you love Kerastase, but you can work in some Paul Mitchell, which is also a great product but costs a little less."

Gaspard and her twin sister and business partner, Heather Mahoney, learned to love hair from their mother, who owned Continental Cut Ups in Metairie, a salon that withstood the oil bust of the 1980s.

"I remember my mother saying, getting your hair done is something people rarely

give up because it's the relationship the client has with the stylist," Gaspard said. "We really emphasize that. We give something extra. That's why we do scalp massages at the shampoo bowl and provide cheese and crackers and complimentary makeup touch-ups."

Regardless of how tough the times, women still want to feel beautiful. As such, hemlines aren't the only thing predicted to come down with the economy. The new budget beauty approach will lead to its own trends.

Some stylists already are hearing customers request more simple cuts that don't require heaps of styling products and regular trims. The goal: look polished but with less professional help.

Back when she was feeling flush, Rebecca Richey used to indulge in the beauty gamut: a regular personal trainer; pedicures and manicures once a month; a brow wax and dye every three weeks.

But when her disaster restoration business slowed down, she gave it all up.

"All the basic things you can do for yourself, I now do," said the 44-year-old from Madisonville. "They were truly a luxury."

But Richey draws a line at her hair services.

"I would rather go without eating," she says, "than go gray."

Fashion writer Susan Langenhennig can be reached at 504.826.3379 or at slangenhennig@timespicayune.com.

Print This Page  | Send To A Friend  | Permalink (Learn More)
Share: [Reddit](#) | [Digg](#) | [del.icio.us](#) | [Google](#) | [Yahoo](#) | [What is this?](#)

COMMENTS (0)

 [Post a comment](#)

Username (Don't Have a Username? [Sign up here](#)):

Password:

Remember Me

Login

Reset

Use of this site constitutes acceptance of our [User Agreement](#). Please read our [Privacy Policy](#).

[Community Rules](#) apply to all content you upload or otherwise submit to this site. [Contact interactivity management](#).

© [nola.com](#). All Rights Reserved. [RSS Feeds](#) | [Complete Index](#)