



TAN IN 10 MINUTES?

Our fair-skinned writer
hits a spa to try some
spray-on color.

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Photos by Matt Wittmeyer

I've been told I have Italian roots, which I probably would believe if I weren't so fair-skinned. Let's just say the French side of my genes won over—in a big way. I have never had the pleasure of soaking up summer rays while anticipating a deep-brown glow afterward. Instead, I can't risk lying down on a poolside chair for very long. I have learned the hard way to keep a safe distance from the sun with the help of a close friend: SPF 30.

Still, I've always secretly pined for the perfect, tanned skin tone. Years ago, I was introduced to the idea of the spray tan when a friend of mine told me she was going to have it done. But the next time I saw her, she was a blotchy, orange mess. Suffice it to say I opted to stay fair-skinned.

However, I gave it a second thought after a chance viewing of "Sunset Tan," a reality show on E! Entertainment Television. The process looked a bit more modern, and the tans more even. Since then, spray tans have intrigued me as a way to look tan while enjoying the obvious health benefits from avoiding damaging UV rays.

So I jumped at the chance to visit Serendipity of Pittsford, a spa and boutique on South Main Street, to try it out for myself. To prepare that morning, I sloughed layers of skin with an exfoliant, focusing on rough skin areas like elbows and knees. "The better



you exfoliate beforehand and moisturize afterward, the better the results,” said Amy Riedinger, owner of Serendipity of Pittsford.

I resisted the innate urge to moisturize and apply my makeup for the day, as per her instructions. I also resisted shaving, as the spa’s Web site recommended shaving 24 hours before.

I arrived at Serendipity, stubbly and sans makeup, to put the \$32 spray tan to the test. As a beginner, I opted for the lightest amount of color.

Manager and esthetician Sarah Witt greeted photojournalist Matt Wittmeyer and me and directed us to a back room where I changed into my bathing suit. The small space was decorated on two walls with faux palm trees and a beach scene behind a navy curtain. I placed sticky paper on the bottom of my bare feet, presumably to save the floor from tanning solution.

Witt asked me to face the corner of the room as she began to spray my back with a chilly mist. With goose bumps, I turned to one side, then to the other and finally faced her. Next I held my breath as long as I could while she sprayed my face and neck. When Witt had finished, the top of the sprayer was removed to become a blower. I was dried to keep the color from streaking or rubbing off.

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After 10 minutes, when the process was complete, I took a peek in a nearby mirror and saw instant results. For the rest of the day, I watched my tan grow darker. It looked a little caked-on in parts, and I saw a spotty pattern on the underside of my forearm, but these issues evened out after a shower the following day.

I shaved in the shower—half-thinking that my tan would be taken off with the razor, but it wasn’t. I did notice a bit of the color running down the drain as soon as I stepped in, though. I was a bit lighter afterwards, but still darker than my natural shade.

I was impressed by the evenness of the tan, although it wasn’t perfect. Day one showed the most signs of imperfection, with slight streaking and spotting. On day two, the tan evened out a bit, but also lost some of its color. By day three I noticed the tan fading from my face first.

I enjoyed my newfound tan lines for about a week. Yet I knew that in time it would fade to reveal my true pasty tone, and I came to grips with that.

I actually welcomed my natural skin color with open arms when it returned. I realize I’m used to being a “mayonnaise girl,” as the Italian side of my family dubbed me long ago. Besides, at least I know that if I ever feel the need to be a shade or two darker—for a special occasion, perhaps—I can always get one sprayed on. **h**