

BUSINESS

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“It soothes the nervous system,”

Wax Bar client says beer is just the thing before she gets a bikini wax at the Ballard skin-care salon

RELAXING WITH A BREW AT THE WAX BAR



Karen and Mac Jahn, owners of The Wax Bar in Ballard, are reflected in a mirror in the lobby of their salon that opened last fall. It claims to be Seattle's only skin-care salon with a license to sell beer.

On the last Friday of every month, just before 5 p.m., physical therapist Rani Linarelli stops by the Wax Bar in Ballard. She sips a \$3 Belgian beer and flips through celebrity magazines while waiting for her name to be called.

Not your typical happy-hour hangout, the Wax Bar claims to be Seattle's only skin-care salon with a license to sell beer. It's a meaningful distinction to Linarelli, 31, who gets a monthly Brazilian bikini wax, a painful procedure made slightly less painful by beer.

“It soothes the nervous system,” she says.

Karen Jahn, a 31-year-old aesthetician and mother-to-be, opened the Wax Bar last fall with her accountant husband, Mac. She had spent the previous decade working at Ballard's Habitude salon, noting that customers occasionally mentioned that an alcoholic beverage might take the edge off a facial or body wax.

To start, Jahn cashed in her 401(k) and obtained a snack-bar license from the Washington State Liquor Control Board, allowing her to sell beer (but not wine) under the Wax Bar name. She chose as her slogan “Relax and Get Waxed.”

Although some salons offer customers an alcoholic beverage,

they're legally not allowed to unless, like Jahn, the owners have a snack bar or restaurant license, says Brian Smith, a spokesman for the state Liquor Control Board.

The Wax Bar's sleek white interior seems more suited to Miami Beach than Seattle. Vertical mirrors are propped on a black floor, and potted wheatgrass plants decorate circular glass tables.

Inside three private rooms, aestheticians remove unwanted hair from just about anywhere. There's the basic eyebrow and lip wax (a combined \$36), as well as the more cringe-inducing nostril (\$14) or nipple (\$15) wax.

The Wax Bar's singular focus on unwanted-hair removal is proof that Seattle is changing, Jahn says.

Five years ago, women typically sought waxing services, she says, because they were about to go on vacation or had begun dating someone new. Now, she says, many consider waxing part of their routine.

“There's no such thing as busy or slow. It's just consistently busy,” she said. “People come in every four weeks, and they don't miss a beat. They pre-book before they leave.”

By Amy Martinez