

Can a \$500 facial cream rejuvenate skin?

By Leah Masterson | TODAY'S LOCAL NEWS

What if someone told you they had a skin-care product that would reverse the signs of aging? What if they said it would fill in wrinkles, smooth expression lines and correct the loss of skin tone and firmness? What if it cost \$500 — for 1.65 ounces.

Sound familiar? You may recall a similar proposal in the movie "Death Becomes Her," starring Goldie Hawn and Meryl Streep as longtime rivals who discover the secret to eternal youth in a pricey magic potion.

"I cannot promise you the everlasting fountain of youth, but I can promise you to park there a lot longer," said Dieter Kuster, chief scientist and chemist for the product: Doctor D. Schwab Alphasomes RC Rejuvenate and Correct cream.

Alphasomes is manufactured in San Diego by CA Botana, a company with more than 40 years of in-house research studying the effects of sea extracts, plants, herbs and vitamins and integrating it with skin-care technology. Doctor D. Schwab is one of three skin-care lines CA Botana makes.

Alphasomes is a vegetable-derived treatment sold at high-end salons.



Alphasomes, which is manufactured in San Diego by CA Botana, sells for \$500 a jar.

But even if one could afford \$500 for a face cream, is it really necessary, and is it really worth it?

"Although it has some very attractive sounding ingredients, I haven't seen any evidence that it is really worth the \$500," said Robert Scheinberg, an

Oceanside dermatologist.

Schneider is certified by the American Board of Dermatology and is a clinical professor of dermatology at the University of California San Diego.

After researching medical journals, he said he hasn't found any published papers that would attest to Alphasomes' effectiveness. He has found testimonials.

"It very well may be (worth the \$500), but I would await some double-blind studies, where both the patient and the person putting it on don't know whether you have the active medication or not. Unfortunately, because of placebo effect, a lot of people will think something does much more than it does," Schneider said.

Alphasomes do not require approval by the Food and Drug Administration.

Escondido resident Ann Laing has used two bottles of Alphasomes in the past two months. She gives facials and sells skin-care products in her husband's dental office in Escondido and has sold five bottles of the product to her clients. Laing said Alphasomes is something everyone should have, but she admits it's too costly for most

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people.

Susanne Sparks of Escondido sells skin-care products under the name The Magic Touch and said Alphasomes makes her skin feel "thicker and tighter."

She's used two bottles in the past eight weeks.

"If someone uses Botox, which is not very good for you, these kind of treatments are a natural way to do the same thing," she said.

Sparks hasn't sold many bottles to her clients.

"Most of them say, 'I like it, but jeez, it's \$500,'" she said.

Even the press release for

Alphasomes states, "At \$500 a jar, Doctor D. Schwab Alphasomes RC Rejuvenate and Correct is not for everyone."

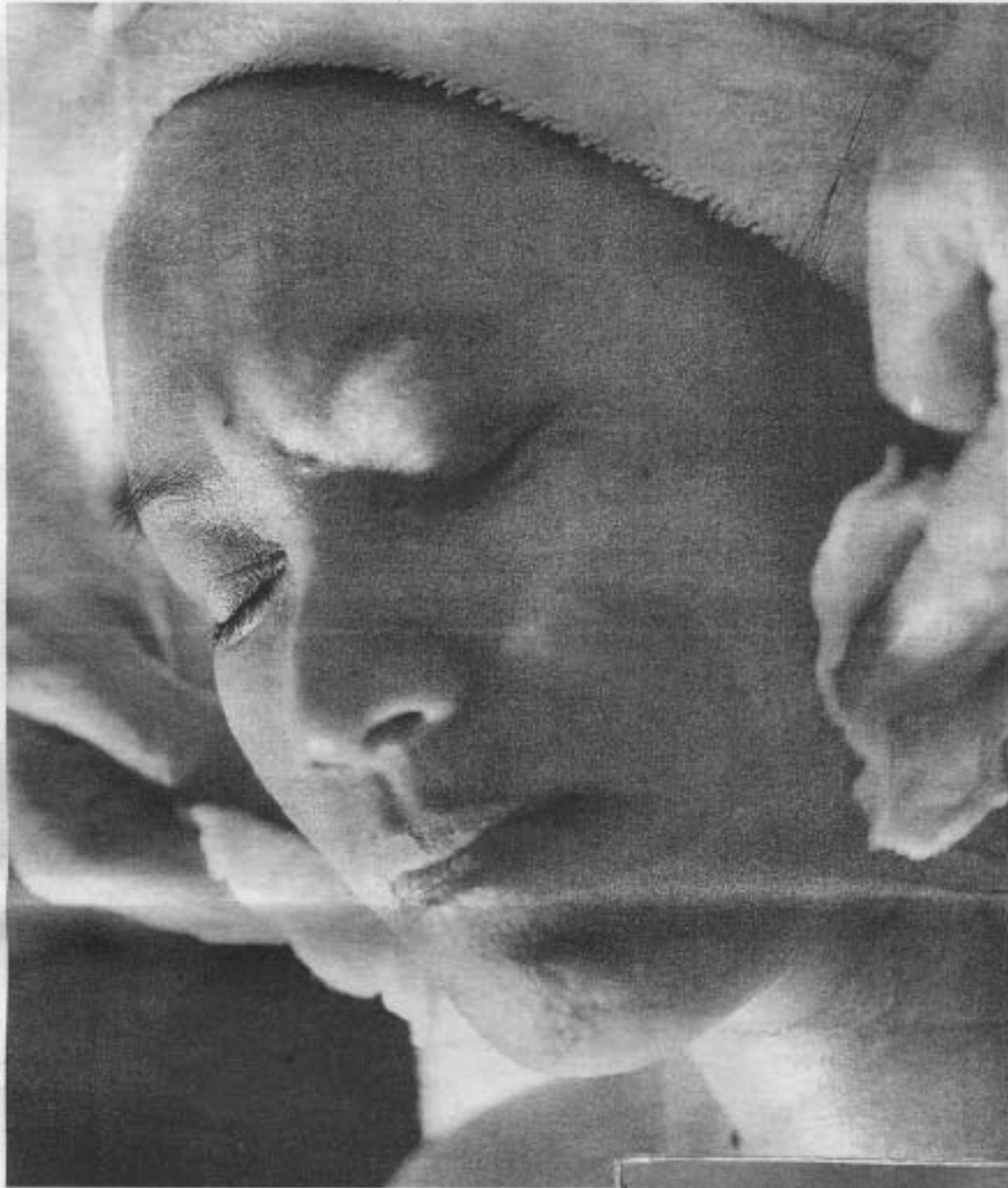
So why is it so expensive?

Kuster said the wonder ingredient in Alphasomes is Euk-134, which protects skin tissue from sun damage and free radicals that can accelerate the aging process.

"It tricks your cells to think young again," said Kuster, who claims Euk-134, which comes in a powder form, costs \$25,800 a kilogram and is created through a long process of fermentation.

"It's a very expensive product, and that's why you don't hear about it," he said.

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Alice Tiongco (above) receives a facial treatment in the Escondido office of Ann Laing, who uses and sells Alphasomes (left). The vegetable-derived treatment is also sold at several high-end salons. *Upper-Tribune photos*

