

Styling Your Hair
"Down There"
By Stephanie
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VAGINA VOGUE

About 10 years ago, my then-girlfriend, a self-identified butch woman, and I were hanging out with two other couples, both butch-femme, more or less. As we were chatting, the conversation moved to pussy, the way it often does. "Do you prefer waxing or shaving?" was the question put to us by one of the butches. My girlfriend and I looked at each other quizzically and then back at our friends. "What?" I exclaimed. Turns out, the other four women in the room, butches, femmes, and in-betweens, all removed at least some of their pubic hair, one way or another. My girlfriend and I were horrified. Butch women waxing their pussies—what had the lesbian world come to?

BRIAR PATCH

The lady-scaping business has taken some unlikely turns in recent years. This particular post-femme gal sports a full, natural bush and cannot fathom why-oh-why women anywhere, of any persuasion or orientation, would subject themselves to what I consider the brutality of shaving and waxing, just to go bare "down there." It may be the middle-aged, Midwestern lesbian in me, but I also feel a bit funny about grown women with bald pubes—they remind me of underage girls. Plus, let's face it, hair removal is *painful*. And honestly, shaved and waxed pussies have a plucked-chicken look.

Certainly the pornification of sex—lesbian and otherwise—has contributed to a standard of beauty and grooming that is far different from what it was when I came of age. As much as I personally refuse to adhere to the latest pubic hair fashions, I am fascinated by the proliferation of hairstyles—as well as the improved methods of hair removal. In fact, I'm kinda obsessed with the latest fashions.

HAIR-STORY

Pubic hairstyles began in the early 1600s, when pubic wigs (merkins) were worn by prostitutes to disguise lice and signs of STDs (then referred to as "venereal disease"). The British were ahead of the times in terms of pubic relations. But in the U.S., the "Pubic Wars" (a phrase coined by *Playboy* mogul Hugh Hefner) had just begun when *Playboy* and the American branch of *Penthouse* began a steady one-upmanship of pubic hair peek-a-boos in the '60s and '70s.

On chic beaches in exotic Mediterranean and European locales, string bikinis became a fashion phenomenon in the '70s. More recently, the explosion of the thong as an "undergarment" turned the Brazilian wax into a mandate.

Today, fashioning one's pubes is the stylish thing to do, whether it's just a quick trim or something extraordinarily elaborate. The designs of choice today are varied, though the Full Brazilian is preferred, according to Audra Senkus-Lemma, co-owner of the Haven and Eve spas in New York City. Senkus-Lemma registered the Sphinx as a trademark service on her waxing menu. She says the Sphinx, named after a type of hairless cat, removes all the hair in the pelvic region. Elsewhere, this is often termed the Barbie Doll.

Senkus-Lemma gave me a rundown on the "official" delineations of the various types of waxes that can be had. A Bikini is cleaning up around the edges of a regular bathing suit line, so no hair sticks out. A French Brazilian brings in the Bikini more, narrower and bare around the edges. A Brazilian Bikini works when one wears a thong—hair is removed from bet-

REVAMP YOUR VA-JAY-JAY FOR VALENTINE'S DAY

Who knows what snatch fashions will be big this year, but current crotch crazes include:

Pubic Hair Dye. What started as a way to cover up a few gray pubic hairs went from fad to craze and is now a steady business. (*betty-beauty.com*)

Va-jazzling. Bejeweling your lady parts seems to have begun when Jennifer Love Hewitt announced on a TV talk show that she

Va-jazzles her va-jay-jay regularly to feel proud of her privates. Va-jazzling is adorning one's vagina with tiny Swarovski crystals (or less expensive imitations, if you are not Jennifer Love Hewitt).

Va-tooling (aka twa-tooting). These painless tats (sometimes referred to as vats) are applied with an airbrush. The process begins with a Brazilian wax to get rid of all traces of hair. After you've



been stripped of all signs of natural womanhood, you can then specify the nontoxic colors of your choice for a temporary design on your lady bits.

ween the buttocks and the outer half of the labia, but some is left on the labial lips and the front of the pubes.

The Full Brazilian (or Modern Brazilian) is waxing between the buttocks, fully removing hair from the labia, but with a very narrow "landing strip" in front.

"Brazilian" has become the term for everything coming off," says Senkus-Lemma, but really, some hair is left after most treatments.

1910 Researcher Havelock Ellis discovers that 67 to 75 percent of women cannot have orgasms during sex.

1930s Second wave of women's liberation.

1930s Psychologist Abraham Maslow's studies on human sexuality find that an increase in a woman's sexual fulfillment accompanies her progress of equality in society.

1953 Sex researcher Alfred Kinsey publishes *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female* revealing that lesbians have significantly more orgasms than heterosexual females.

1973 Dell Williams opens Eve's Garden, the first feminist women's sex shop in New York.

1974 Pro-sex feminist Betty Dodson publishes *Sex For One* and teaches women how to masturbate.

1980 A sex survey finds that 78 percent of females masturbate regularly.

TIMELINE PHOTOS: SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION LIBRARIE (ELLIS), ARTIS & SZELMEK (GIRL)

JAMIE TRUEBLOOD (GRIFFIN)

RIDE IN STYLE



Who said harnesses need to be utilitarian? Strap on the sexy with this vintage inspired "Circus" leather harness from Dirty Darlings. Each item is handcrafted from dark red leather and hand screenprinted with cream stripes. Adding to its

charm are velvet-soft cream ruffles and a duo of mustachioed leaping aerialists make this a harness that has to be seen (or worn) to be believed. It's the perfect boudoir ensemble for the fashion-forward top. (etsy.com/shop/transaction)

MODERN MUFFS

I spoke to other lezzies who lady-scape and found that, at least among the under-30 crowd, shaving is the preferred method of tidying up their pubes. "I shave," one friend told me. "I'm not a fan of pain for beauty. I shave to pull it all in, then I trim," she said. "I actually prefer when it's grown in

a bit...It's fuzzy and not bumpy or anything, and I keep it pretty close to how it grows, like an upside-down triangle. Or I'll do a landing strip. I need some kind of hair."

Another friend tells me that eliminating her hair down there is in line with her general distaste for body hair. "I am naturally rather fuzzy, so I've always shaved my legs and armpits. Over the years, I had encroached on the edges of the bush, and it got trimmed and trimmed until one day a lover shaved me all off, just to try it. That was five or six years ago," she reveals. "I simply don't like the look of body hair—on anyone. It takes me a moment to psychologically adjust to the look of a lover who doesn't shave."

She continues to shave so that her va-jay-jay feels neat and tidy, but like me she is less than enthusiastic about the idea of fashioning her pubes. She has returned to the "ragged-looking landing strip" more because she is reluctant to take it all off than because she likes the look. "I still think landing strips are reminiscent of a certain porn-star aesthetic that doesn't do much for me."

Clearly, the lesbian community has all sorts of tastes when it comes to lady-scaping. Somewhere in the modern ruby-fruit jungle of pubic hairstyling, I'd like to think there is a sweet balance between happily bare and wildly natural. The real message I want to put out to my sisters is, please be kind

to your lady parts and tolerant of others', whatever your fashion choice or erotic preference.

RX FOR A BAD WAX

A **Va-jay-cial** is exactly what it sounds like: rejuvenation for your vagina, similar to a facial, but between your legs and not your ears. Invented by the California waxing salon Stript Wax Bar, the Va-jay-cial is for women whose Brazilian waxes turn out not to be the sexy experience they hoped for. For the ingrown hairs, bumps, skin irritations, and other unwanted side effects of waxing, the 60-minute, \$60 treatment may rescue your crotch from cruel punishment. Performed about a week after your initial wax, the treatment involves four steps: antibacterial cleansing with witch hazel, a papaya exfoliation, and then removal of ingrown hairs by a licensed esthetician. The finale consists of a calming anti-freckle, anti-acne mask and a lightening cream. Voila! Now you're set to go out and do it all over again. (striptwaxbar.com) ■



LIFE ON WHITE/ISTOCK

GLOSSARY OF FASHION FORWARD FUZZ

For some specific designer thatches, see the list below. Proceed at your own risk and choose your pubic stylist wisely, or you could pay dearly (and painfully) for a hairstyle gone wrong.

ARROW: a simple strip with an arrowhead on the bottom.

BASIC BIKINI: a tidying up of hair that gives the appearance of a bikini-bottom shape.

FULL BRAZILIAN: the most popular pubic hairstyle of all, the waxing off everything except for a narrow landing strip of hair.

CARDSHARK: pubic hair is shorn to leave a playing-card design. Apparently, hearts are the rave, diamonds the fave, then there are gals who deal in spades—however, clubs are rarely played.

CHARLIE CHAPLIN: a horizontal strip that looks like a mustache (sometimes referred to as the Adolf).

NATURAL: a growing bush left untouched.

PRINCESS: a vertical oval shape.

TRIANGLE: a small, triangular patch.

SPHINX, OR BARBIE DOLL: the complete removal of all hair in the pelvic region. We're talking waxing your labia majora as well as between your cheeks. ■

1982

The G Spot and Other Recent Discoveries About Human Sexuality is published by Alice Kahn Ladas & Beverly Whipple, claiming that the G spot can produce more intense female orgasms than clitoral stimulation.

1985

Ann Landers receives 100,000 responses to a question she asked her readers and finds that 72 percent of women would prefer to be "held close and treated tenderly" rather than have sex.



1996

Sixty-two percent of women in relationships are satisfied with the frequency/consistency of orgasms.



1983

University of Washington sociologist Pepper Schwartz coins the term "lesbian bed death" in her book *American Couples*. According to Schwartz, lesbians experience less sexual intimacy the longer the relationship lasts.



1990s

Dr. Raymond C. Rosen estimates that anorgasmia—the inability to orgasm—affects 24 to 37 percent of women.



2006

The Journal of Sex Research publishes the survey results of 19,000 Australian women by three universities revealing that women having lesbian sex are more likely to reach orgasm than those having straight sex. 76 percent of women who slept with another woman reached orgasm, compared to only 69 percent who slept with men.

TIMELINE PHOTOS: GUTHY-RENKER (SCHWARTZ)

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