



YOUR BEST MONTH EVER

# CHARLOTTE CHO

This month on ELLE.com, America's leading crusader for Korean beauty imports will help you eradicate dull December skin with four weeks of intensive lessons on the art of good hydration

On an international flight last year, Soko Glam founder Charlotte Cho slipped out of her seat, armed with a hydrating sheet mask to apply in the bathroom. The plane's dimmed lights, she hoped, would provide ample cover on her walk back: While hydrogel and microfiber masks are ubiquitous on cool-girl Instagrams, they skew more Hannibal Lecter than dewy maven when viewed outside of bathrobe-bedecked snaps. But Cho needn't have worried. She returned to her seat to find the man next to her sporting his own mask. Her first thought: I am definitely going to Korea right now.

Cho, whose parents are from Seoul, grew up in the sun-drenched hills and strip malls of mid-'90s Los Angeles

County, heartily embracing her hometown's aesthetic of bold tans and scarce brows. She graduated from UC Irvine in 2006 with a degree in communications and media studies, and two years later took a job in Samsung's marketing office in Seoul. Her culture shock arrived with her coworkers' casual comments about her appearance—as in, “I could see your dark circles from way over here”—which she recalls with circumspect humor in the just-published *The Little Book of Skin Care: Korean Beauty Secrets for Healthy, Glowing Skin* (William Morrow). And so, in a city of poreless, self-appointed complexion consultants, Cho discovered the ever-expanding world of Korean beauty.

In 2009, Cho met her

future husband and business partner, fellow Korean American Dave Cho, who was serving as a U.S. Battalion Fire Support officer in Seoul. The pair shared a mutual appreciation for hard work and infantlike skin—Dave's mother had drilled a respect for SPF into him at an early age—and, back on U.S. soil, noticed the tendency of Western brands to adopt skin-care trends several years after they were popularized in Asia. “The Korean beauty industry has a higher appetite for risk,” Cho posits; her friends in the American beauty industry say that “it takes two or three years for a great idea to be turned into a concept.” By the end of 2012, the entrepreneurial, recently wed pair (neither of whom had any training in e-commerce) had launched Soko Glam, an online store where Americans could get their hands on the newest Korean beauty innovations.

These days, talking to Cho—who moved to New York in 2013 and completed 600 training hours to become a licensed aesthetician earlier this year—is like speaking to a living (and reliable) skin-specialized WebMD. Confused about facial mists? Cho recommends looking for a product with hyaluronic acid (water-only mists sit on top of the epidermis and draw out moisture). Caught between an acid-based chemical exfoliator and a mechanical scrub? If you have sensitive or acne-prone skin, go for the chemicals. With the right product, it's less harsh.

Cho, who still spends almost a third of the year in South Korea serving as Soko Glam's eyes on the ground, is set on curing our chronic skin underhydration—a symptom of which, counterintuitively, is acne. Visit ELLE.com to banish blemishes once and for all. —*Keziah Weir*

## GAME FACE

End the year glowing—check ELLE.com each week for Cho's fail-safe guides to stellar skin



### DECEMBER 7

#### Facial Oasis

Your skin is your largest and most exposed organ. Learn how to combat even the driest winter woes with these deep-hydration techniques.



### DECEMBER 14

#### Proven Innocent

Cho's need-to-know info busts myths about skin-care ingredients, so you know once and for all what you're really putting on your face.



### DECEMBER 21

#### The Rejuvenator

Kick the December doldrums with a visit to a Korean spa. Cho lays out what to expect and the treatments you shouldn't pass up.



### DECEMBER 28

#### Bonus Round

After three weeks of priming the canvas, supercharge your glowing skin with this lowdown on Korean makeup innovations.

Clockwise from left: Lauren Kallen; Tinetite Reed/Getty Images; Max Oppenheim/Getty Images; William King/Getty Images; Runstudio/Getty Images