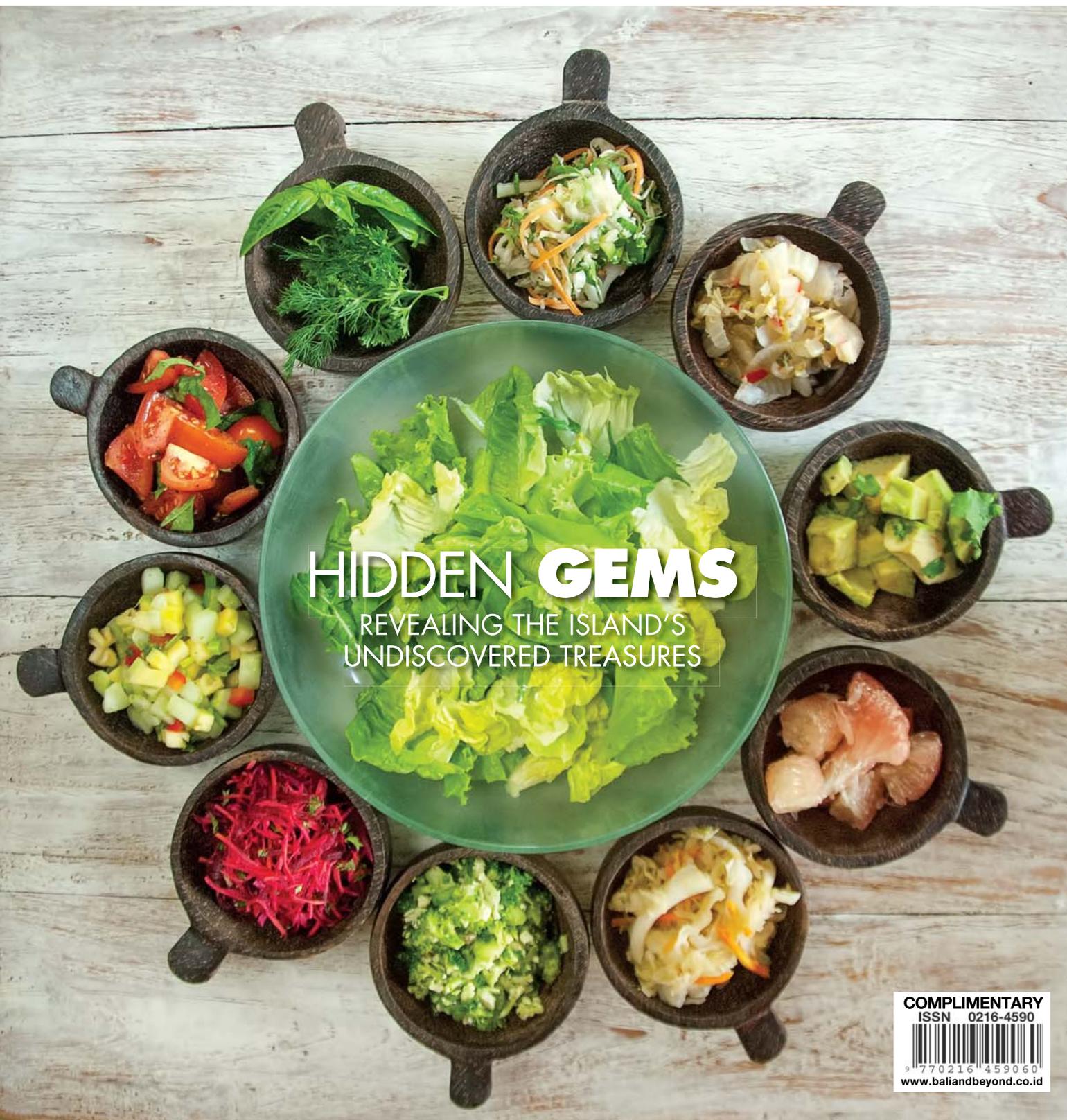


THE SUN... THE SAND... THE SURF... THE CULTURE OF PARADISE AND OVER 18,000 SURROUNDING ISLANDS

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The Beauty Degree

Since it was first established nine years ago, the spa academy Bali BISA in Sanur has been sending their graduates on to become spa talent at top-notch spas and hotels around the world. Britain-born founder Penny Ellis talks to us about how the school helps the local community.

Bali & Beyond (BB): How did you come up with the idea of opening a spa school in Bali?

Penny Ellis (PE): I was working in Malaysia and my contract ended when I was offered a job in Bali. That's how I got here. But the new

job didn't work out. So I thought, what am I going to do? The obvious choice would be spa because that's what I have been doing all my life. I did my research and found that Bali has a million spas but no spa schools. And that's the reason. At that time, I thought I'm going to do a school with the intention of always following the international standards.

B&B: Your students range from locals to those from all over the world...

PE: It's a surprise! It's not what I was expected. When I founded the school, I thought our students would all be Indonesians. But in reality, about 98 percent of our students are from overseas. Our school is not expensive by international standards, but we have the quality and the standards. As for Indonesian students, we give discounts and a sponsorship program. We have many overseas companies wanting our students and they support our students by giving sponsorships.

B&B: How do you source the teachers?

PE: Our teachers are locals because we try to give back to the community. They have to have good English and minimum of two-year experience as a spa therapist. Working overseas is a plus because it means they are used to working with international clients. First, we put them in a three-month program. They have to understand our standards and SOP (Standard Operation Procedures) but more importantly, we teach them how to teach and train. They are well trained and their knowledge is always increasing.

B&B: What are the qualifications you use to teach the students?

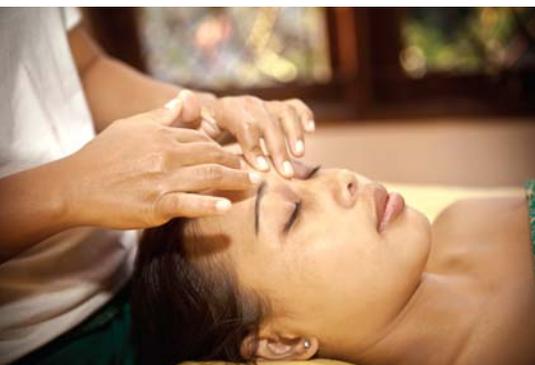
PE: In the beginning we were running with our Bali BISA training that I designed. Then we applied for the CIBTAC (Confederation of International Beauty Therapy and Cosmetology) qualifications from Britain – we now have 12 CIBTAC qualifications that are



Penny Ellis

PHOTO OF PENNY ELLIS BY RISTY NURRAISA
ALL OTHERS COURTESY OF BALI BISA

required in many countries today. Last year CIBTAC endorsed one of our programs, the Balinese massage, which really puts Indonesia, especially Bali, on the map. We have applied for eight more programs, and they were all accepted. This now puts Bali BISA on the world stage.



B&B: What else do you teach other than spa therapies?

PE: We teach them how to create spa products. We have a preparation area where students mix things and they love it. We only use Indonesian ingredients and all the oils are from Bali. We also have anatomy and physiology classes for those who want to learn sports and pregnancy massage. It's important for them to understand the body. And we provide spa management classes.

B&B: How do you help your students to get a job after they graduate?

PE: We have so many spas and hotels from around the world asking for our students. We send them the CVs and put our students in



touch with those who are looking for therapists. We follow our students' development as well, for instance how they first work in the management division and then become a spa director. It's wonderful! I love to see Indonesians grow. When they first come here, they are shy and can hardly speak English. Then I get to see them grow and become successful in the spa industry. Lovely.

B&B: What do you think is the main asset of Balinese spa therapists?

PE: The Balinese have the natural heart and touch. And that's why the world wants them. This is actually something Asians have. It's in their heart and no one can teach them

that and that's why they become good therapists. A spa therapist deals with people and their body, so you have to have love in the heart and understand all about the body, tensions, and muscles. They need to know how to help a client and make them feel wonderful.

B&B: Any upcoming projects for Bali BISA in the near future?

PE: We are going to take the company worldwide. It's already in motion. For instance, I will be going to Kenya help them set up our school. That's the next stage of Bali BISA. To offer business liaison and franchises. Hopefully all this will be good. ■

By Risty Nurraisa

Bali BISA is open for anyone – from tourists that come for a one-day class, novices to get a job, and to therapists who want to increase their skills. Click www.balibisa.com to see the courses.