

SBLS

Santa Barbara Life & Style Magazine

September/October 2025



A TASTE OF THE SEASON

more than

*FOUNDED BY THE FAMILY BEHIND KIEHL'S, CELEBRITY-LOVED RETROUVÉ
COMBINES INGREDIENTS SOURCED FROM THE FAMILY'S MALIBU FARM WITH
SCIENCE-BACKED FORMULATIONS FOR ULTRA-LUXURIOUS SKINCARE*

BY *Andrea Manokian*

PHOTOGRAPHY *Ryan Mayo*

skin deep



RETROUVÉ CO-FOUNDER KLAUS HEIDEGGER



According to a quick Google search, on average a person is said to encounter 80,000 people in their lifetime. Now, I don't know the validity of that statement, but I do know this: My encounter with the Heidegger family is one I will never forget. They are, without a doubt, some of the most hospitable and genuine people I've had the pleasure of meeting. And if their permaculture farm is any testament to their personalities, consider them real down-to-earth people.

"These products were never meant to be sold," says Hannah Heidegger, daughter of co-founders Jami and Klaus Heidegger and vice president of Retrouvé. It's a statement that may be hard to believe—especially given that the company's Instagram page is dotted with notable celebrity faces. But don't let their A-list clientele fool you: Retrouvé is "very much a family-run and -operated business. We are actively involved every day, all day," says Hannah.

Retrouvé began as a passion project for Hannah's mother, company co-founder and former Kiehl's heiress Jami Heidegger, who initially formulated the products for her personal use. Ever since Jami was a little girl working alongside her grandfather and father at Kiehl's, she possessed a natural talent for developing skincare, fragrances and other nifty potions and elixirs. "It was always easy for me to think of things that no one else had thought of before," says Jami. Once she eventually sold Kiehl's to the L'Oréal Group, Jami began creating products for her own skin, driven largely by her frustration with the abundance of parabens, artificial dyes, perfumes and other additives in many formulas on the market at the time. Fueled by her desire to create clean, effective skincare without unnecessary fillers, she unknowingly began crafting what would become Retrouvé's earliest products. "It's just as important what you put in the product as what you don't put in it," says Jami.

Before long, people took notice of Jami's radiant skin and couldn't help but wonder what her secret was. "People were always asking me, 'What do you use on your skin?'" she recalls. And in true Jami fashion, she shared. "The queen of sampling, they called her," says her husband and Retrouvé co-founder Klaus Heidegger. This was the nickname given to Jami in the 80s and 90s due to her generosity in handing out samples to those curious (she was a true pioneer in this new way of marketing), in addition to her reputation for relentlessly testing samples until the formulations were just right. "People really liked it and started to ask if they could get some to purchase," says Jami. And as the saying goes—the rest is history.

Her commitment to protecting and nourishing her skin—without compromise—led to the creation of skincare that knew no boundaries and cut no corners. "I trust my wife," says Klaus. "She was always ahead of her time. With Kiehl's, she was ahead of her time, and with Retrouvé too," he adds. Today, Jami is still the mastermind behind Retrouvé's product line, and sampling new formulas as well as different variations of products has become her family's norm. "My bathroom looks like a laboratory," Klaus jokes. "I have like this much space," he gestures with his hands to show me. I assure him his predicament sounds all too familiar—and one my longtime boyfriend would eagerly attest to.

Included in the formulations are raw materials sourced directly from the Heideggers' permaculture ranch in Malibu, a farm I had the pleasure of touring and witnessing firsthand. I rode through the property in an ATV with Klaus and Hannah as Klaus pointed out each plant and plan, sharing stories of their sustainable practices. No detail goes overlooked, from how the water is sourced to the strategic placement of companion plants to the careful way each crop is maintained. But perhaps the most memorable part was Klaus' exuberant and infectious passion for the land and its permaculture methods—a passion rooted in his upbringing, no doubt. (His mother was a farmer, and he was raised on a farm.) The Malibu farm itself was designed by Sepp Holzer, the "godfather of permaculture," with the help of his right hand, Judith Anger. Needless to say, it's as bona fide as permaculture gets.

For those ingredients not sourced directly from their farm, the Heideggers rely on suppliers who meet and maintain the highest quality standards. One thing that becomes abundantly clear when speaking to the family: quality is not just their goal, it's their non-negotiable. "We don't compromise. Jami didn't compromise. When she made these products, she wanted to make the best products available. Whatever we get, we get it from the best sources," says Klaus. Their dedication to procuring top-tier ingredients is impressive. When the company faced a shortage of vitamin C, instead of switching suppliers and risking a drop in quality, they simply accepted their fate and waited it out. "A lot of vitamin C is ascorbic acid, whereas ours is called THD ascorbate and is specifically from Japan, and it's a pharmaceutical-grade form of vitamin C. Because of this, if it's not available, we are not going to compromise and get a lower quality," explains Hannah.

When you're sourcing best-in-class ingredients, you need a packaging system that's just as advanced. Retrouvé has a trademarked clinical name for their triple airless protection system: RTAPS313™. The packaging consists of three tiers, requires a vacuum seal and features an airless mechanism within the pump. "A lot of people don't realize that product gets stored in the pump [and] all that product is being exposed to the environment. When the product is exposed to light and to air, it can oxidize," explains Hannah. The RTAPS313™ system was developed to preserve the integrity and shelf life of their formulations. This is also why their packaging is black—to prevent any light from penetrating.

Every Retrouvé product is created with thought, intention and scientific backing in mind. Jami doesn't come up with new products for the sake of expanding the line or generating buzz. Retrouvé products are highly curated and multipurpose. The company has launched 10 products in 10 years—11 if you include their lip serum. And for each product, there's an extensive review process where the Heideggers themselves, and many others, put samples to the test. "We work with a lot of med spas, dermatologists, doctors, and estheticians," says Jami. "I love to get feedback from customers, as well as scientific validation through clinical testing," she adds.

By the time this story is published, Retrouvé's new herb gel mask will be available—or just about to launch. The mask will incorporate herbs grown on the family's farm, along with other skin-nourishing ingredients designed to feed and hydrate the skin. Speaking with Jami about the inspiration behind it, she says, "I thought, there are so many masks out there, how can I make something that is a little bit different and that isn't already created, and that also goes with our philosophy?" Years in the making, the mask has been rigorously tested and reviewed by many, including Klaus and Hannah. "For my skin, it's my favorite product that my mom has ever made," says Hannah.

If you're interested in trying Retrouvé's products, why not start with their bestsellers? "Our best-selling products are our Intensive Replenishing Facial Moisturizer and our Revitalizing Eye Concentrate Skin Hydrator," says Hannah. "Our Hydrating Lip Serum just won awards for best lip treatment from Harper's Bazaar and best lip serum

from InStyle and Shape, and our Intensive Replenishing Facial Moisturizer has won multiple awards for dry skin, as well as for its innovation in science," she adds.

Their products truly impressed me from the start. As I write this, I've already placed an order for more of their Skin Brilliance Priming Pads. In just a short amount of time, these pads have done wonders for my skin, brightening my dark spots and even reducing the size of my pores without making my skin feel parched. Their Balancing Face Oil has also become a personal favorite of mine, moisturizing my combination skin without clogging my pores and provoking breakouts.

However, skincare is individualistic and everyone's skin type and needs are different. Retrouvé understands this, so they've come up with a way to help. "We have a concierge service where you can call in, email, FaceTime, Zoom—however you want to communicate—and you can get a personalized, complimentary skincare consultation," says Hannah. "We feel like that is the best way to start because then we get an understanding of your skin, what your skin needs are, and what you're looking for," she explains.

A look at the Retrouvé website reveals just how many ethical initiatives the company invests in. "We are partnering with One Tree Planted, so for every product sold at Retrouvé, we sponsor the planting of a tree, and we've sponsored nearly 24,000 trees to date. We have also partnered with Plastic Collective to help reduce our plastic emissions," Hannah says. The company prides itself on being cruelty-free and offers several vegan products: their Luminous Cleansing Elixir, Skin Brilliance Priming Pads, Conditioning Toner with Chamomile, Nutrient Face Serum, and their Balancing Face Oil.

At Retrouvé, no detail goes unnoticed because the Heideggers know, as well as anyone, that it's the little things that make the biggest difference. From their permaculture farming methods to their thoughtful packaging and the unrelenting testing and sampling of each formula, every step is intentional. Retrouvé isn't just another skincare company—it's the Heidegger family's legacy. And the best part? You can feel good knowing that these exceptional products are crafted by equally exceptional people.*

