

Hemispheres

MARCH 2020

Three Perfect Days
Washington, D.C.

<p>CHILI</p>  <p>SMOKES</p>	<p><i>Ben's</i></p> <p><i>Chili Bowl</i></p>	<p>CHILI</p>  <p>BURGER</p>
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BEN'S... A WASHINGTON LANDMARK **SINCE 1958**

1213U

BEN'S *Chili Bowl* **BEN'S**

Where you can ladle up a bowl of history on the vibrant U Street Corridor

Chili BOWL *Chili* SMOKES *Chili* BURGERS



New Sensations

From VR meditation sessions to gong baths, the wellness world looks for ways to heal using all five senses



—SEE—
**Find Your Zen
 Space in VR**

Digital detox programs have long sought to reduce our dependence on screens, but some spas are now using devices as meditation tools to marry virtual reality technology to more traditional treatments.

The new **Kohler Waters Spa** in Chicago offers a Virtual Reality Pedicure, in which spa-goers don a headset and choose guided meditation on compassion, depression, or relaxation. They also select a musical style and the kind

of animated scenery they'd like to view, ranging from a sunny beach to a snowy field. An audio track provides meditative cues. "Instead of the expectation of conversation, you really get to have this time to yourself," says Nikki Miller, director of Kohler Waters Spas.

"It's a shift to being more quiet and serene and using the technology for mindfulness."

In Las Vegas, **Qua Baths & Spa** at Caesars Palace starts the Nobu Go Facial with an eight-minute VR head trip created by skin-care brand Natura Bissé that features

visuals of five elements—earth, water, fire, air, and metal—to relax you ahead of the hydrating facial. And at **Esqapes Immersive Relaxation** spa in Los Angeles, patrons kick back in a cozy recliner with a headset for VR meditation sessions.



—SMELL—
**Catch a Curative
Scent**

Can you bottle wellness? Proponents of aromatherapy have long claimed so, leading massage therapists to use energizing or calming massage oils. Now, scientific data is beginning to support what has long been instinctive: Scent can heal.

The R&D company Aeroscena, based at the Cleveland Clinic, has published studies that show aromatherapy improves mood and decreases nausea and pain for pediatric palliative care patients. The Ascents by Aeroscena line of products offers formulas for sleep, calm, focus, pain management, and more, and the uplifting scents are available in Stay Well rooms at multiple MGM Resorts in Las Vegas, including the **Park MGM** and **MGM Grand**. “Scent works the fastest,” says Mark Kohoot,

Aeroscena’s founder and CEO. “It’s faster than touch or sight, because it’s so directly connected to the brain and there’s no nerve pathway that requires translation.”

Researchers have also found that phytoncides (the essential oils emitted by trees) help boost immune function. As the Japanese practice of *shinrin-yoku*, or forest bathing, becomes more popular, people are trying to bottle the experience. A new massage at the **Spa at the Mandarin Oriental Boston** is inspired by Aromatherapy Associates’ cypress-scented Forest Therapy blend. Wilderness calm, it turns out, can be found in the big city.



—TASTE—
**You Are What
You Digest**

It’s not news that what you eat is important to your health, but more attention is now being paid to digestion, specifically the microbiome (the microbes in your gut). The functioning of your gut, sometimes called the “second brain,” has been shown to have an impact on your emotional state as well as physical wellness: Serotonin, the chemical linked to feelings of happiness

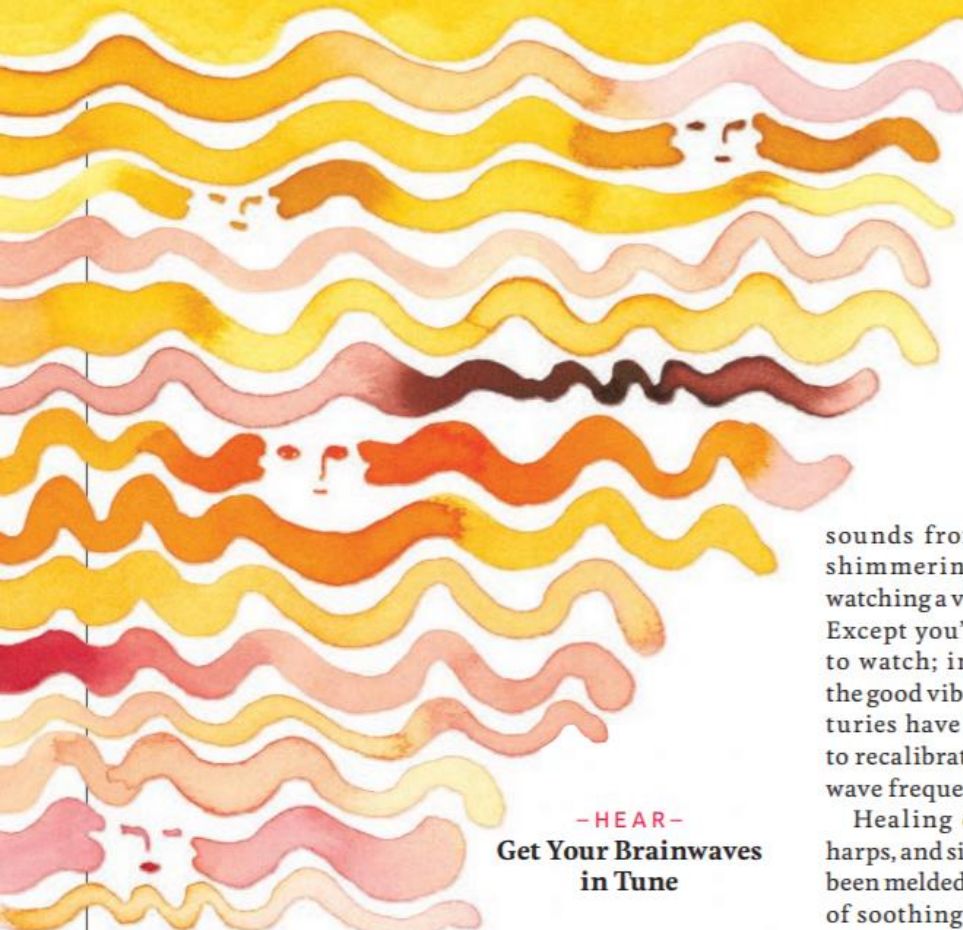
and well-being, and melatonin, which regulates sleep, are both made in the gut.

At **Canyon Ranch Lenox** in Massachusetts, nutritionists and dietitians consult with guests and administer diagnostic tests for problems such as gluten intolerance, food allergies, and irritable bowel syndrome to come up with a plan that incorporates healing foods, supplements, and lifestyle changes. “It’s a two-way

street between the gut and the brain,” says Cynthia Geyer, M.D., the resort’s medical director. “We used to say, ‘You are what you eat.’ Now, it’s also what you digest and absorb based on trillions of bacteria in the digestive tract having a bidirectional conversation between them and you.”

At Thailand’s **Kamala Koh Samui**, the new Enriched Gut program takes

a multidimensional approach to aiding digestion, addressing stomach acid levels, sleep deprivation, stress, and diet. Week-long (and beyond) programs combine nutritional advice with holistic therapies drawn from traditional Chinese medicine, Ayurveda, and naturopathy.



-HEAR-

Get Your Brainwaves in Tune

Watching Martha Collard of Hong Kong's **Red Doors Studio Limited** play her gongs—eliciting a range of

sounds from bass beats to shimmering tones—is like watching a virtuoso violinist. Except you're not supposed to watch; instead, bathe in the good vibes, which for centuries have been purported to recalibrate people's brainwave frequencies.

Healing drums, chimes, harps, and singing bowls have been melded into a symphony of soothing treatments that are rooted in ancient practices. "The wellness world has become a gong show," says Beth McGroarty, research

director at the Global Wellness Institute.

In London, Michelle Cade runs **Mind Like Water Well-being**, where she focuses on healing by sound to restore the harmony of the body's biorhythms and endocrine system. At **Recharj** in Washington, D.C., solitude-seekers can drop in for a meditative gong bath or a power nap.

Sound therapies are breaking the spa barrier, too. At the **Six Senses Maxwell** hotel in Singapore, guests checking in are invited to stand inside a giant Tibetan singing bowl and close their eyes. A staffer then strikes the metal basin with a wooden mallet, enveloping tired travelers in soothing vibrations.

-TOUCH-

Feel the Frontiers Expanding

As the basis of massage, touch is the elemental sensual aspect of most spa experiences. Now, the focus has moved to heightening the sensation of touch and treating a part of the body that can't be manipulated in a muscular sense—namely, the head.

The new **Miraval Berkshires**, opening in Lenox, Massachusetts, this spring, will offer Vasudhara, a pool-based treatment in which therapists blindfold their clients to accentuate the sense of touch as they manipulate their charges, floating in water, using Thai massage stretches.

Most wellness treatments promise some degree of mental clarity, but new

treatments addressing the skull get right to the matter. In New York City, the exclusive Head Spa at **Masa.Kanai** applies Ayurvedic techniques from India to massage the scalp, open pores, and clean and condition hair—think of it as a facial for the scalp. Meanwhile, the massage specialist **Goku** recently opened its first location outside of Japan, in Manhattan. Fans swear that the dry scalp massage puts them to sleep instantly and leaves them renewed and energized when they wake.

