

# Touch of Mink for your hands and feet

## Orla and Jim Verling

**Company:** Mink Hand & Foot Spa

**Position:** founders

**Location:** Dublin

By Michelle Devane

Husband-and-wife team Jim and Orla Verling set up Mink Hand & Foot Spa, a New York-style manicure and pedicure salon, in Donnybrook almost two years ago.

With their second salon opening at the end of January, also in Dublin 4, 2008 is set to be an exciting year for the couple. Their enthusiasm for holidays in the United States brought them into contact with the high quality salons in New York with their luxurious interiors.

"My original job was as an Aer Lingus air hostess and my husband ran a wine business – Verling's Fine Wines & Spirits

in Clontarf – for about 20 years," said Orla. "We toyed with the concept of opening a salon for a good few years but didn't act on it because we hadn't found the perfect location."

The salon specialises in treatments for the hands and feet only, offering a diverse range of manicures and pedicures. They range from simple mini manicures to the deluxe solar manicure with warm shea butter and a hand-to-elbow massage. There is even a chocolate and cranberry pedicure, where chocolate-dipped strawberries are served.

In the run-up to Christmas, the couple saw a 50 per cent increase in business compared to the same period last year. "We're overwhelmed by the positive reaction we've received since opening. It's been all word of mouth," she said. "I wanted to create a warm and welcoming atmosphere in the salon, one with client satisfaction being the most important thing."

An art lover and interior design enthusiast, Orla was involved with the styling of the Donnybrook spa. It features cream leather pedicure chairs, and she designed the dusk-coloured velvet chairs.



Orla Verling: 'we want to develop every element thoroughly for the hands and feet'

Orla is designing a second salon, which will open in the Oval building on Shelbourne Road. "It will be an amazing store, 220 square metres containing ten pedicure tables and ten manicure tables. But we are going to make it intimate; there won't be rows of treatment tables.

"We'll also have another room for chiropody. We want to develop every element thoroughly for the hands and feet, rather than going into treatments such as waxing." The Ballsbridge spa will also have VIP rooms and the couple will sell products by Dr Murad, an American skin specialist.

The Verlings employ ten people but, with the opening of the new store, that will increase to 40 in the next few months. Born in Sutton, Co Dublin, Orla is keen to open a third spa in the next year and she is seeking a northside Dublin location.

She will then start looking at potential sites in Cork, Galway, Kilkenny and Waterford. "I care about the standard of the treatment and I believe customer service is most important. I'd like to open spas across the country in the next couple of years, but I don't want to rush into it."

TONY O'SHEA