

**S**unscreen is now accepted as an essential summer purchase – and these days there is a dazzling range of sun care products available.

Creamy lotions, oil-free sprays, cooling gels and anti-wrinkle ointment are all struggling to compete for shelf space in the shops and a place in your luggage for beach holidays.

There is no doubt that there is now a huge market as a result of years of health warnings about the risk of skin cancer.

A massive 40 per cent of us are sun worshippers according to a survey. But we are also aware of the dangers with 58 per cent saying they were concerned about getting sunburnt.

It means that skin care and beauty specialists are cashing in. The industry, which was worth £119 million in 1993, is now worth £146 million.

But what exactly is the difference between the smartly packaged, high-cost lotions and less glamorous sun care?

At the upper end of the market, there is Estée Lauder, Elizabeth Arden and Clarins, which have all rapidly developed their products for the beach.

Clarins now commands 35.8 per cent of the premium care market and feels justified in charging its customers for quality not quantity – a 125ml tube of sun care gel is £14.

Daniela Jenkins, of Clarins, says: "The big thing about Clarins is that we have a special range of skin care which we have developed.

"Rather than just putting on a sunscreen, our protection goes deep down to the cells – this provides much more protection. You are getting the best product."

By contrast, Boots and supermarket chains promote cheaper ranges which they claim are just as effective as cosmetic brands.

Boots has been making sun cream since 1927. The massively successful Soltan hit the shelves in 1939 and this year they have launched No7 sun care specifically for women.

The company say it has a policy of fair pricing and does not

place a premium on people's health.

Tesco says it keeps its prices low by avoiding the use of boxes, cartons or any extra packaging. Its 400ml bottles of sun cream cost £6.99.

Sainsbury's has its own brand of lotions too. A 200ml bottle of Factor 35 Moisturising Sun Lotion costs £4.99. A 50ml tube of sunblock from Clinique is £11.50.

Dr Ian White, consultant dermatologist at St Thomas' Hospital, in south London, says: "I have seen the prices and thought they were staggeringly expensive.

"It does not matter which brand you use. If it says SPF30 then that's precisely what it should be."

What is striking about the pots and bottles on sale is they all look surprisingly similar. The ubiquitous orange and yellow bottles are evidently intended to conjure up warming images.

Helena Rubinstein stands out only because its bottles are white and lightly dusted with golden glitter. All products in its Golden Defense with Vitamin C range cost £17.

But the differences – aside from price – are difficult to spot. The new fad in sun care is the spray-on lotion.

Aimed at men and children because it's much easier to use, producers across the board are coming up with the same product.

Jenkins says: "There is a real demand out there – people just find it much easier to use and love the idea of a spray."

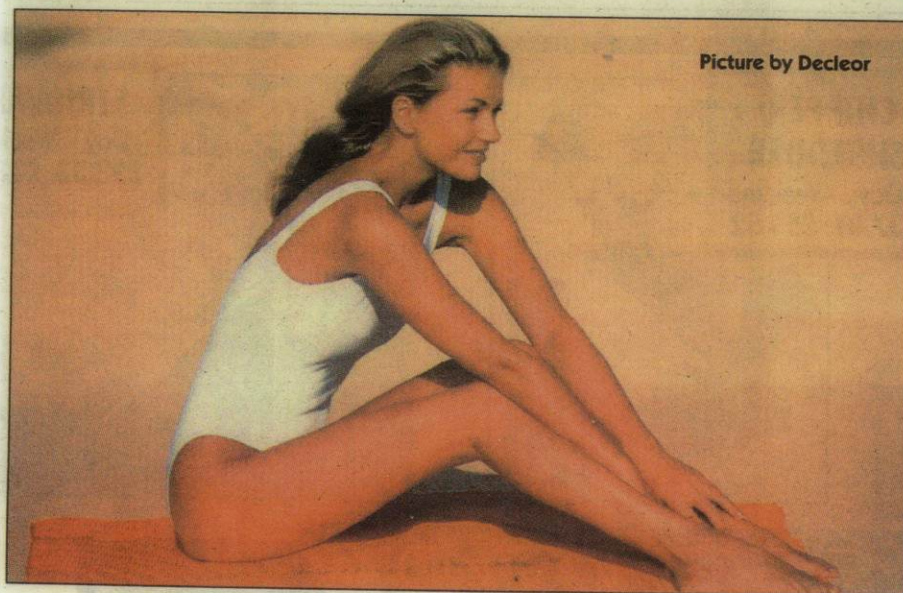
Shiseido Refreshing Protective Spray SPF12 costs £15.50, Estée Lauder's version is £14, while Sainsbury's is from £4.99.

Variosun has produced a nice sun 'gadget' with its adjustable sun protection lotion (£11.99) from factor 2 to factor 30.

The dispenser is equipped with a dial which enables you to individually adjust your preferred sun protection factor at any time. Available by mail order on 0800 0260 220.



**Variosun has come up with a novel idea to suit everyone – an adjustable sun protection lotion.**



**Picture by Decler**