



BY JESSICA ZURELL | PHOTOS BY KIMBERLY COOK

Zumba caliente!

My first Zumba experience was an accident.

I was channel-surfing, looking for some background noise while I cooked, when the screen suddenly filled with tanned bodies doing reggaeton. Being a travel channel addict, I continued watching what I thought might be a latin episode by my snarky and debonair darling, Anthony Bourdain.

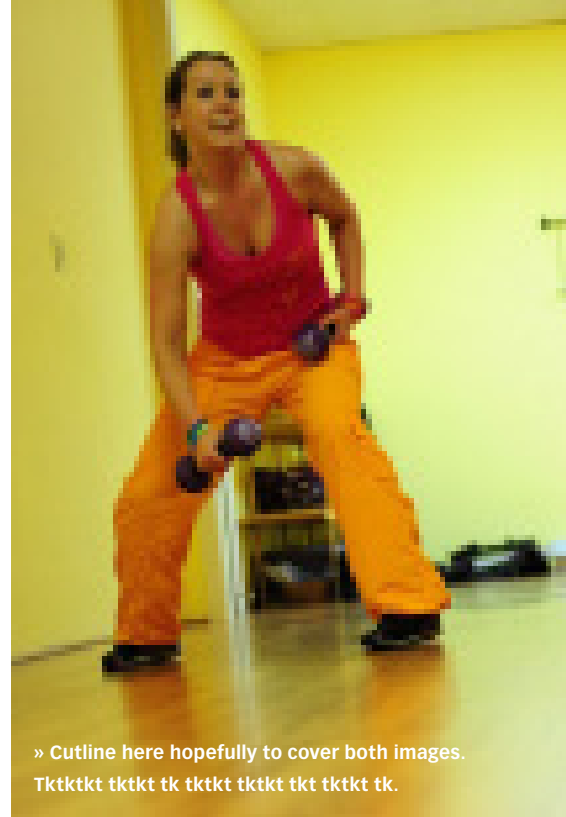
After a few seconds, it became clear that the shimmy-shaking on screen was an infomercial for Zumba fitness videos. Several months later, the Zumba name was popping up on class schedules at my gym.

The idea of salsa and merengue spic-

ing up cardio routines is nothing new. Dance aerobics classes harnessed that concept back when legwarmers and fannypacks were still part of standard gym attire. The Zumba trademark was developed by Columbia native Beto Perez a decade ago, and reshaped the concept of latin dance fitness to new levels.

When done in conjunction the right nutrition and strength training, Zumba trims, tucks and tightens.

The varied of steps fuse traditional latin dance steps with hip-hop, then adds a few stylized lunges for extra low-



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er-body work. Classes for seniors and children - Zumba Gold and Zumba-tomic, respectively - make it an option for people of all fitness levels. There's Aqua Zumba for a non-impact workout at the pool, and Zumba Toning for those who want to go beyond cardio.

Even with weights and water thrown in, one of the most inviting aspects of the class is the way steps are broken down. While the idea of dancing may conjure visions of the clumsy phase of Dirty Dancing, Zumba establishes a pattern from the beginning. Dances follow the verse-chorus-bridge pattern of the music, making it easier to anticipate what steps are coming next.

CNY Fitness and Dance in Cicero offers Zumba/toning classes, which can be more difficult to find. While a fitness regimen consisting solely of cardio won't yeild lasting results, if any, a combination of Zumba and strength training can be highly effective.

Above all, enjoying an exercize increases the likelihood that it will become a permanent part of your routine. Maintaining a fit body means consistent workouts - not skipping out when energy levels are low. Opting for a caliente class like Zumba turns dreaded cardio session into a highlight of the week.

As for my next Zumba experience, it will be absolutely intentional. ■



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