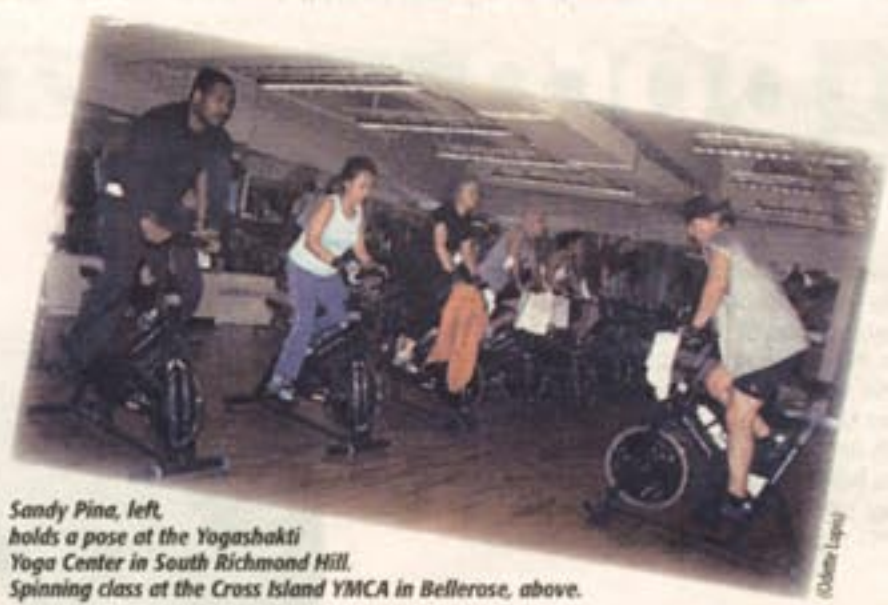


# qbororo

January 25, 2007

ARTS, CULTURE & LIVING



Sandy Pina, left, holds a pose at the Yogashakti Yoga Center in South Richmond Hill. Spinning class at the Cross Island YMCA in Bellerose, above.

## WORKOUT, WORK IN

**N**ot everyone who made good on a New Year's resolution to start exercising will be able to keep that promise through year's end. But for now, memberships at gyms and smaller, specialized studios are spiking as energized newbies and lapsed gym rats make a new start.

A popular, beginner-friendly class is spinning — indoor cycling that seeks to imitate real-life cycling movements and terrain. Because the stationary bikes have variable resistance controls, novices can start low and peddle at their own pace. Bikers segue from warm-up to hill climb, then jumps and squats, all to the beat of loud, pounding music.

"It's good for all levels," said Nita Zackson, the fitness coordinator at the Cross Island YMCA in Bellerose, where the spin class is 45 minutes of cardio and leg strengthening under dimmed lights. Another reason Zackson cites for spinning's growing popularity: "You don't need to be coordinated."

Besides memorizing some basic safety tips, there isn't the same

learning curve (and potential embarrassment) of something like step aerobics. Not to mention the fact you can discreetly turn the bike's knob to decrease the resistance.

The latest in fitness trends to keep your mind and body in balance  
by Carol Forget

Most Queens YMCAs, including Ridgewood, Flushing, Jamaica and Long Island City, offer spin classes along with a wide range of programs to keep things interesting, such as aquatics, group exercise, health and fitness and

personal training — all for reasonable membership dues. Until the end of January, they'll waive the \$100 joining fee for families and adults.

At the Rock Health & Fitness Club — a full-service gym in Astoria featuring a climbing wall — yoga, boxing and something called "urban rebounding" are the sought-after classes, according to head fitness coordinator Terri Herbert.

Though Madonna didn't initiate the yoga craze, Herbert said, "When she started to do it, it became more popular."

Novelty and an intense, tension-busting workout account for boxing and kickboxing's popularity, while urban rebounding, which is a series of cardio moves executed on a mini trampoline, is both fun and low-impact. "It's less jarring than being on a treadmill or a floor," Herbert explained.

Above a certain age, avoiding injury during a workout becomes as important as building strength and increasing flexibility. And there is a trend afoot to accommodate. "What we're seeing a lot of is balance training," said Stephanie Moyers, a spokeswoman for Power Systems in Knoxville, Tenn. Power Systems is a supplier of fitness equipment that can gauge what is current by what's flying out of the warehouse.

continued on page 28



(Anthony Corallo)

## Fitness Trends

continued from page 21

Balance training has become especially popular among older baby boomers working with personal trainers. They often incorporate a destabilizing element into well-known exercises, bicep curls done while kneeling on a stability ball, and squats performed by standing on two inflatable discs are two examples. These strengthen the core (torso) muscles, and over time, teach the body how to regain balance quickly. It could mean the difference between a near miss and a fall when running for the bus on a crooked sidewalk.

"Also hot right now is mind/body-yoga and Pilates," Moyers said. Pilates, an exercise system that also emphasizes the core, in addition to body alignment and flexibility, uses specially designed machines suitable for the gym. The mat work can be done at home using a large stability ball, resistance rings for upper and lower body toning and a smaller, 8-inch diameter ball for positioning.

More and more studios for Pilates and yoga have appeared in Queens in recent months. The Yoga Room, with locations in Astoria and Long Island City, offers classes in both disciplines. Hot yoga, taught at the Astoria location, is very popular, said Anya Porter, the manager. It's hatha yoga in a room heated to 105 degrees, and because it's easier to stretch muscles when they're warm, it's good for beginners.

Porter, who teaches yoga, said people keep coming back to it because it exercises both body and mind. "It creates a space for you to feel better in every way," she said. That includes stress relief: "I find it keeps me on a very even keel in a city that can definitely put you off track."

At Gold's Gym in Howard Beach, longtime

aerobics instructor, Mary Napolitano agreed there was a mind/body trend in fitness, and it's jumping the gender gap. She sees plenty of men at Gold's yoga and power yoga sessions. "You're holding poses that require a lot of core strength," she said. "Men don't get that lifting weights."

What's big in her field is low-impact cardio training such as dance aerobics, which replaces the old-school pounding and jumping with continuous movements. One such example is a one-hour mambo/salsa class offered twice weekly for an additional fee (\$50 for members, \$60 for nonmembers).

Until someone invents virtual exercise, prying yourself away from your laptop or television for a few hours a week is still the only way to reap the many benefits of stretching, crunching and pumping. The good news is there have never been so many fresh, fun-focused and balanced workouts designed to keep the mind and body engaged — for the long run. **21**