



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 in the kitchen, when the screen suddenly filled with tanned bodies doing reggaeton. 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 spicing up cardio routines is nothing new. Dance aerobics classes harnessed that concept back when leg warmers and fanny packs 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 with the right nutrition and strength training, Zumba trims, tucks and tightens.

The varied steps fuse traditional Latin dance steps with hip-hop, then adds a few stylized lunges for extra lower-body work. Classes for seniors and children - Zumba Gold and Zumbatomic, respectively - make it an option for people of all fitness levels. There's Aqua Zumba



» Heather Erikson

for a non-impact workout in 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.

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

Above all, enjoying an exercise 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 a dreaded cardio session into the highlight of the week.

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



» From left, Emily Janisch, Laura Losito, Christine Losito, Christine Potter, Jenny Marquardt and Brenda Webber participate in a Zumba session at Fitness & Dance of CNY.