

BOOT CAMP CLASSES



ARE STILL THE HOT TICKET

BY BARBI WALKER

Boot camp classes are not a new fitness phenomenon, but they are currently the workout du jour. With ever-changing routines, motivational instructors, and team spirit, boot camp classes provide a lot more than just a workout for participants—they provide an experience.

Boot camp classes are just what you'd expect—intense, mentally and physically challenging, and bonding, just like a military boot camp. Happily, the fitness classes are limited to 60 minutes and don't include a drill sergeant.

Boot camp classes started taking over where the spinning craze left off, somewhere around the late '90s. Although spinning and cycling classes still have dedicated devotees pedaling out stellar heart rates, boot camp fitness takes pushing your entire body to a whole new level.

"Boot camps are so popular right now because they are efficient, social and get results," says Nicole Clancy, a fitness expert and founder of Health Your Way, an online health and wellness magazine.

Classes are usually small, around 6 to 12 people, and are facilitated by an instructor who guides, motivates, and encourages students through 30 to 60 minutes of interval training, which can include anything from wind sprints and push-ups to jump rope and tire pulling or tossing. Students move through the routine quickly, with little time in between, and are challenged to work hard. Many boot camps are held outside at local parks or recreational areas, and are sometimes run and/or created by former professional athletes, coaches or military.

One such boot camp fitness club is SWAT Fitness in Tucson. SWAT was created by retired Air Force Master Sgt. Ron Holland,

a former military SWAT Commander and Tucson police officer. He and his wife Jana use their talents to give SWAT its unique edge.

While in the military, Holland worked with overweight airmen to help them meet the military fitness standards. Jana has a master's degree in psychology and helps members overcome behaviors that get in the way of their success.

Members' body, mind and spirit are all given a full "workout." Through boot camp instruction, cooking classes, nutrition seminars, and lifestyle/wellness coaching, members can work toward a healthy, fit and balanced life at SWAT.

Designed around the concept of military boot camps, the workout is a circuit-style program that focuses on the muscle confusion principle, meaning muscles get a different workout every time, or a "shock," which makes them grow and change.

"To see real results, you need to use muscle confusion," says Marnie Wong, owner of Boot Camp Babes. "In the three years that we've been doing this, we've never done the same workout twice."

Most fitness experts agree that changing up your workout routine is the best way to get results—to improve your cardiovascular system, lose weight and build muscle. But it also keeps students from getting bored and quitting.

The camaraderie that accompanies boot camp fitness is unique. Classes stimulate a collective, community-minded connection. With smaller, more personalized classes, members become more supportive of each other. Unlike traditional classes where there is little interchange between students once the music starts, boot camp students sometimes work in pairs or teams. The transition

from one exercise to another also allows for brief conversation and interaction, and provides a team-like feel.

It seems easier to make it through hard core classes when you're not doing it alone, adds Clancy. "The social aspect of boot camps makes us work harder," she adds.

The personal connections made at Boot Camp Babes are something Wong says they are most proud of. Many of the women are moms and often do a lot of bonding throughout the four-week sessions, she says. One of her rare perks is the childcare offered at the boot camp class. While moms are pushing through their grueling workouts, their kids are playing together under the supervised care of CPR-certified caretakers, enjoying time in the sandbox, being read to, or burning off energy outdoors.

"WE'RE PROUD OF THE FACT THAT WE ARE MAKING CONNECTIONS FOR PEOPLE, BOTH MOMS AND KIDS," SAYS WONG. "WE ARE CONNECTING THEM TO EACH OTHER, THE OUTDOORS, AND TO THE COMMUNITY."

Although almost all boot camps offered throughout Arizona focus on hard-core circuit training, there is one which is more on the "Om" side of life. Essence Yoga Studio in Queen Creek offers two yoga boot-camp-style classes.

There are beginner and intermediate yoga boot camp classes which offer a slightly faster-paced yoga practice, focusing on alignment. The faster pace provides a cardio workout, while

paying close attention to alignment in poses that strengthen muscles.

There are hundreds of boot camp fitness classes throughout the state—a Google search turned up 135,000 results in Arizona. From corporate health clubs to locally owned, you'll have no problem finding something to suit your needs and budget. Before you sign up, make sure to check out the instructor's credentials. Ask for their certification status and follow up with the organization to ensure they are in good standing, suggests health and fitness website everydayhealth.com. 

**Check with your doctor before starting any new fitness routine.*



Marnie Wong
Owner/Trainer of Boot Camp Babes

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RESOURCES

Boot Camp Babes
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