

SHALL WE DANCE?

IF SO, THEN LET'S ZUMBA! IT'S A MIX OF LATIN MOVES THAT BURNS CALORIES AND BOOSTS YOUR HEART RATE, WHILE YOU HAVE FUN AND LOOK GOOD DOING IT!



Shall we dance? If so, then let's Zumba, a mix of Latin moves that burns calories and boosts your heart rate, while you have fun and look good doing it. Watch an episode of ABC's "Dancing With the Stars" and you'll start thinking you can dance. Or at least you'll believe you can try. You probably should go with that thought, because at least you'll get a good aerobic workout while you're giving it your best shot.

If you're not ready for ballroom dance classes, or up for investing heavily in a rigorous course of tango classes, then dip your toe in the dance pool with Zumba. It's a new form of aerobic training that mixes high-energy, mostly Latin music and dance moves into a fitness routine that

is interval-based and fairly easy to follow throughout the 50-minute to one-hour classes.

You'll feel sexy doing it, and look sexier when you get maximum workout results.

"Zumba is a fun and very uninhibited way to dance," she says, "a way to get out and really feel the music."

There is a lot of footwork involved, but it's also about full-body movement. Still, it's not hard to keep up a close approximation of what the veterans around you are doing, and there's a quick learning curve

thanks to the repetitive nature within each cycle of the class.

Incorporating elements from different Latin dances, Zumba originated in Colombia and was brought to the United States

by Alberto "Beto" Perezin, a Miami-based dancer and choreographer in 1999.

Among Zumba's newest instructors is Marge Ballus of Workout Express in Mount Kisco. She just finished training in

March and started leading local classes in April.

"Zumba is really hot in Florida and it's finally making its way up here," says Ballus. "The membership (at Workout Express) thinks it's great."

At Workout Express you can opt for a regular Zumba class or go for Zumba Express, which combines Zumba with circuit training.

"Instead of some other form of aerobics, you do Zumba as part of your circuit," explains Ballus. "It's a great workout and you really come out energized."

Zumba is slang word that in Colombia means "to move fast and have fun." The technical definition of Zumba is interval training to international rhythms, where you take the heart rate up,

bring it down, up, down.

It's like a one-hour workout where you're doing both fast and slow songs, so you're not pumping out the entire hour. It incorporates actual steps from the salsa, cha cha, merengue, mambo and the tango.

According to Ballus, shows like "Dancing With the Stars" have definitely piqued a lot of interest in Latin music and dance.

Although you can buy Zumba DVD's (a set of 4 is \$49.95 at Zumba.com), Ballus says exercising with a group is the only way to go.

"It's a lot more fun in a group-setting, with the music blasting. There's nothing like it." •