

FitnessFusion

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On the surface, Budokon, a fitness program that blends yoga, martial arts and meditation, might seem just another fitness fad. Embraced seven years ago by exceedingly toned glitterati such as Jennifer Aniston and Courtney Cox, it's now making its way to us plebs via neighborhood gyms around the country.

Budokon, however, is not to be confused with general workout routines like Tae-Bo, according to its originator, Cameron Shayne.

"It's an art form and a way to explore working with your body and mind in a unique way."

Shayne, 34, who has studied martial arts and yoga extensively, beginning instruction at age 12 with the traditional Korean art of MooDukwon, created Budokon as a way to wed the two disciplines.

"Martial arts is a very rapid-speed movement that requires strength, agility and power," said Kancho (the title of founder in Japanese) Shayne, theorizing that if you were to slow martial arts down, it might look like yoga.



For Shayne's own training, he found there weren't enough techniques in the body of hatha yoga to accommodate all of the many aspects of martial arts.

"So, I needed to create new postures that were more reflective of martial-arts techniques."

Thus, Budokon, or "the way of the spiritual warrior" in Japanese, was born. Shayne bases his system on four key components -- mind, power, body and spirit -- and toward the goals of developing character, discipline, honor and self-mastery.

The North Carolina-bred Shayne, now a Los Angeles transplant, first began teaching Budokon on the West Coast in private sessions with the likes of Aniston and Cox. He said those clients gradually gave it the national momentum it is beginning to enjoy. A typical class, he said, begins with meditation, moves on to a yogic-type flow of Budokon techniques, and transitions from there to Budokon martial-arts moves before coming to a close with a return to meditation.

Deborah Harris, Pilates instructor and owner of Premier Pilates and Yoga in Warren, which offers Budokon workshops, finds that first-time attendees of the class are often unsure of what to expect.



"You're not sparring with other people; you're not competing with anybody else," Harris said. "It's purely a



workout for yourself. And with the martial arts, you're adding a physical-defense aspect, which is very empowering, especially for women."

Harris says her clients remain motivated, in part, due to the building-block nature of Budokon. Workshops are taught in a six-week interval where attendees continue their mastery of the initial poses and exercises they learned in the first week.

"It's always challenging, but not discouraging," Harris said. For this reason, she said, Budokon is a great way to come back to the exercise world after being out of it for a while.

Sensei Oksana Fitzmaurice, a Budokon instructor at Harris' studio, contacted Shayne and began studying with him after reading about Budokon in a yoga magazine. Fitzmaurice, who also has taught yoga and martial arts for eight years, said the Budokon system is "excellent for improving cardiovascular (fitness), your limb muscles and to develop self-esteem."

The latter echoed Shayne's contention that Budokon at its core nature was developed with more in mind than just the physical.

It is much more than that for Danielle Abramson, 32, of New Providence, a devotee of Fitzmaurice's class. She said that Budokon strengthens her core, arms and shoulders, giving her a total body workout. Equally important, said Abramson, who has a 3-year-old son, are its mental benefits.



"It helps center me," she explained. "I'm a working mom, so by Saturday morning when I take the class, I've usually built up a lot of stress and aggravation." Abramson said Budokon, "really helps me let all of that go. The meditation at the end is a great reminder of how to focus on the moment and not worry about what comes next."



For Bridgewater resident Ruby Manalo, 37, Budokon was a way of reaching beyond the everyday dimensions of being "Mom."

"I enjoy being active, and I want to show my kids that I'm not just a mom who cooks, cleans and works. I take care of myself." Budokon, she added, clears her head. "I come out of the class smiling."

Shayne may have had these enthusiasts in mind when he created Budokon, an alternative to the mindless mish-mash of exercises often thrown together at the gym.

"Either you are going to run on the treadmill for an hour and watch some celebrity gossip show," he said, "or you are going to do something for your personal

cultivation. All movement," he added, "is a way for you to look at your habits in the world and your way of life.

4 tips to take to Budokon

- Never train with someone who isn't certified in what they teach.

"I kid you not," Pilates instructor and studio owner Deborah Harris said, "you can actually get certified off the Internet for \$35.95. Those people aren't going to be trained properly."

- Let the instructor know ahead of time if you have an injury or sprain. "The instructor will give you appropriate modifications and let you know what you should and shouldn't do," Harris said.
- Come with an open mind, Sensei Oksana Fitzmaurice said.

"People often come into their first class with a competitive mind frame, and they shouldn't," she said. "You are here to create your own space and go at your own speed."

- "Prepare to sweat!" Budokon enthusiast Ruby Manalo of Bridgewater said.