

ISLAND LIVING

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Despite the name, the Martini Workout is some serious exercise: no really, it is

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Until you think about balancing one on your stomach, you wouldn't necessarily think a martini would be good for your health.

Though fond of the classic cocktail, Jessica Athas wasn't thinking about their health benefits either several years ago when, teaching students abdominal exercises at the Harvard Club in Boston, she asked them to imagine balancing a full glass on their stomachs without spilling a drop.

"It's a key visual. Everyone can relate to the idea of a martini glass and how easy it is to spill," said Athas, a Boston native who has been teaching The Martini Workout privately for three years in Boston at the Harvard Club, the University Club and select business conferences.

It's now arrived on Nantucket. Through October, she is offering the patented workout five times a week at YogaSmith on Amelia Drive. Designed for golfers and tennis players in particular, Athas said The Martini Workout is a total body stretching and strengthening program. And no, it doesn't involve drinking martinis. **At least not during the workout.**

"It's for the people who are die-hard athletes and the people who have had a few too many martinis, and it can be as easy or as challenging as you want," Athas said, sipping a ginger and pineapple martini Thursday evening at Cinco.

The tapas restaurant next door to YogaSmith has partnered with Athas to offer \$5 martinis to people who participate in the 4 p.m.



Photo by Nicole Harnishfeger

Martini Workout leader Jessica Athas exercises her stomach muscles during a class last week. She's substituted a water bottle for the martini glass she asks her class members to envision.

Martini Workout on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Cinco's owner, Michael Sturgis, said he's excited about the partnership.

"It adds another element of diversity to Amelia Drive," he said Thursday, pausing between the bar and the kitchen to greet Athas.

Admittedly, it takes someone with a certain sense of humor to appreciate The Martini Workout. But Athas doesn't teach anyone under 21 and she knows she's not the only one who looks forward to a drink at the end of the day. Her favorite is Stoli up with a twist, which is where The Martini Workout's slogan "Fitness with a Twist" came from. Athas said having access to droves of attorneys at the Harvard Club who were so enthusiastic about her workout helped her trademark The Martini Workout name and slogan.

"It's about good living, enjoying yourself and being

healthy," she said. "It's a cute name but there's a real workout behind it."

A certified yoga, Pilates and Spinning instructor, Athas bases The Martini Workout on a foundation of traditional stretches and then, depending on who she's teaching, adapts it to tennis players, golfers and even moms. In Boston she also tailors classes to water-sports and skiing.

As someone interested in many of those activities herself, especially golf, Athas is familiar with the moves, as well as the muscles that need to be stretched for optimal performance. She said most of the people who take the golfers' Martini Workout are men who quickly learn how much a little abdominal work can help their swing. The Martini Workout for mothers targets hips and thighs.

"Some people think this is a joke, but it's helping people get through their day with ease. I know what it's

like. I just want to get through my day and maybe get an extra 25 yards on my tee shot," she said. "So many people have said to me after two to three workouts, 'Jess, I feel so much better.' That's what it's all about."

Athas keeps her classes small to ensure everyone gets a few moments of individualized attention several times an hour. She and her assistant, Jill Drury, help people deepen their stretches with weights and stretching bands and hands-on support. "It's about doing your own workout," Athas said.

For obvious reasons, Athas doesn't have people balance real martini glasses on their stomachs while they're lying on the wooden floor at YogaSmith, but last Friday she demonstrated the concept with a water bottle.

On some less-conditioned stomachs, the bottle quickly toppled to the floor, but on Athas' it stayed upright with only the slightest tremor.

Athas, 34, is a lifelong athlete who used to swim competitively and model for Reebok. But when an injury made it difficult for her to continue high-impact sports like running, she became more interested in simply staying fit and healthy. She said she thinks The Martini Workout is a perfect match for Nantucket, where she said people enjoy martinis as much as they like looking good. And, she said, the two seem to go hand in hand here and elsewhere because she can't count the number of times people have talked to her about their fitness goals while sipping the slender glass.