

Burned by the Kettle

Feeling the heat thanks to kettleball

By Meagan Parrish

When I hear the words, I can't help but smile.

"More butt!" says Christina Dexter, fitness director of New Self Renewal Center.

And though I wish she were suggesting I actually grow a bigger behind (because I could easily do that), Dexter's real goal is to help our class drop down into picture-perfect squats.

I'm in the midst of a kettleball (also known as kettlebell) training session, and if it lives up to the hype, I'm expecting to feel the burn in no time.

One of the fitness world's trendiest toys, kettleballs have skyrocketed in popularity thanks to the high-efficiency workout they provide. Modeled from traditional cast-iron kettlebells, they're like little cannon balls with a handle that lets you lift, swing, swivel or press them, using more muscles with each consecutive movement.

The result is an exercise session that tones, strengthens and gets your heart rate up in less time than many other workouts. In fact, kettleballs might just be the holy grail of fitness. Why sweat it out for an hour when you can get it all done in half the time?

But there is a catch. As Dexter notes, proper technique is key to getting through



Fun Fact: Kettlebells originated in Russia and were measured in poods. (That's right. Poods.) One pood equaled about 36 pounds.



the workout sans injury. In her class, the focus is all about alignment. Hence, more butt.

After our short warm up, we each snag our preferred kettleball (which come in a range of sizes and weights) and the real work begins. Squats seem to be the main course of the day but we perform a variety of toning moves that would be familiar territory for many regular exercisers—from strength-trainers to yogis. The only real surprise is how easy (and fun) it is to pass the kettleball from hand to hand, swing it down and up, and work the upper body in an array of different ways. Less clunky than a standard pair of dumbbells, a kettleball's possibilities feel endless.

And 30 minutes later, my trembling

muscles are a clear indication that the kettleball really has worked me from head to slightly exhausted toe. With a busy life and only so much time to squeeze in exercise, I leave a little bit sweaty and a whole lot excited by how quickly I can get both a satisfying workout and more butt—or at least a slightly more toned one.

➔ Where to go

New Self Renewal Center offers both 30-minute kettleball and 60-minute kettle-core classes. Kettleballs can also be found at many gyms around town and are available for use alone or with the guidance of a personal trainer.