

## ENRICHING PILATES BY GOING BACK TO BASICS

# NATURAL WAY TO GET FIT

By Kara Martin

Joseph Pilates, the founder of Pilates, was much inspired by the way animals move and often went to zoos to watch them in their natural habitat, believing them to be wonderful teachers.

Cats, for example, he observed, move with grace and power, accomplishing what they need to do without overly-developed muscles – just as balanced and efficient muscular development is one of the priorities of the Pilates method.

His book 'Return to Life through Contrology' has a section where he talks about how the cat's back muscles ripple as it stretches and relaxes itself, and about how felines are so utterly relaxed when they sleep. In fact, cats, large or small, seem to be the embodiment of the Pilates principles: centering, concentration, control, precision, breath and flow.

The Hundred Pilates over here in Dubai want to shift the focus from just using Pilates as a quick-fix toner and encourage clients to delve deeper and explore that link between Pilates and animals, and instructor Walid Tebarki invited me to see for myself why it pays to get back closer to ground level.

"Joe Pilates is using animals' and kids' images to bring us back to the original shape," explained Tebarki.

"They move effortlessly because they have the perfect balance between the inside and outside world.

"The moves of animals stimulate their fascia (the sheet of connective tissue surrounding muscles, blood vessels, and nerves, binding some structures together, while permitting others to slide smoothly over each other). And they never work out by tiring one or two muscle groups as some fitness trainings do.



A unique way: Performing The Frog with additional props.

"When animals move they use their entire body – the perfect example for a balanced body.

"Pilates said 'you are as young as your spine is flexible', and so most of the movements [in Pilates] strengthen the core muscles and stimulate the deep muscles of the back by keeping the spine flexible and strong."

### THE CAT

One of the gentlest and simplest ways to stretch your back, and a move which aids in strengthening and making more flexible both the abdomen and the back muscles. It improves body posture, balance and core strength.

On all fours, align your hands beneath your shoulders and your knees beneath your hips, then inhale as you arch your back by raising your head and allowing your butt to stick up and out. The counter pose is to then exhale and pull the navel in towards the spine as you curve your lower back into a C while rounding into the upper back. Your back should ultimately be rounded to the greatest extent possible as you push your hands

“Joe is using animals and kids images to bring us back to the original shape”  
Walid Tebarki

into the mat and gaze at the navel with a lowered head.

### THE FROG

This squatting position can be done on the ground, mat, with springs and equipment (to help imitate a frog leaping), and Tebarki says many Asians often squat over sitting or standing as it is a healthy, natural resting position.

Over time many Western adults are not able to place their heels flat on the ground when squatting because of shortened Achilles tendons caused by sitting on chairs, and wearing high heels, for extended periods, he has observed.

He explains: "The Frog' stretches the spine, hamstrings, tendons, and releases the deep pelvic floor.

"The movement should be dynamic. Visualise the frog in movement – it is energetic!"

### THE SWAN

Similar to yoga's cobra or sphinx poses, in this case visualise an elegant, long-necked swan. Walid says if you put a drop of water on the top of its head, it should slither all the way down the neck and back to the tail and into the water.

"The long spine of the swan looks soft and long, one piece, one spine. The swan in Pilates is an extension of the back but the extension should be long, up and forward, not up to the ceiling – that will help to strengthen the deep muscles (multifidus, rotators) and to turn off superficial muscles (erector spinae)."

"When we do a full back extension we can use the equipment like the push through bar (right) to help to release superficial muscles of the back too."

What's interesting is each of these moves feels completely different when translated onto other Pilates equipment, the reason Tebarki encourages going beyond the mat and experimenting with other Pilates tools.

"All these props – mat, Reformer, Chair, Cadillac, pole – are interconnected with each other, we cannot separate them. To get the benefits of Pilates you must use and explore all of them."

This exercise also taught me that there are still so many other smaller muscles that I didn't know existed, and that need work.

"Strengthening the small muscles helps the big muscles to work better," says Tebarki. "We also work the big muscles in Pilates but we try to focus on what our human culture turned off."

Try Pilates: Log on to [www.thehundred.ae](http://www.thehundred.ae)



Pictures: S. Nair/Sport360

Something new: Tebarki leads Sport360's Kara Martin through the movements of 'the Swan' with the aid of Pilates equipment.

## Lifestyler with Josie McKenlay

### PUMPKIN AND SQUASH

The only time I came across a pumpkin during my childhood was during Halloween, but it deserves so much more attention than its annual use as a lantern. You will see from the following recipes how versatile it is and the nutritional value (squash included here) is of interest too.

► One cup of pumpkin/squash provides 214% of the recommended daily value of vitamin A, 33% of vitamin C, 23% of fibre, manganese 19%, vitamin B6 17%, potassium 14%, vitamin K 11%, folate 10%, B2 and omega 3 8%, magnesium 7%.

So a good source of vitamins and minerals.

► They are packed full of cell protecting antioxidants and are right up there with the leafy green vegetables.

► Omega 3 is anti-inflammatory and these vegetables are a good low fat source compared to oily fish and walnuts.

► Considering the clear antioxidant and anti-inflammatory benefits of pumpkin and squash, we can expect to see cancer studies in humans eventually identifying this food as a risk reducer for certain cancer types. Research so far shows that these vegetables may be very useful in preventing lung,

breast, colon and prostate cancer. They will also help keep your heart healthy.

► Blood sugar regulation is closely tied to B vitamins: squash and pumpkin provides a good amount of five B-complex vitamins, so these vegetables could be useful in preventing or treating diabetes.

► The seeds from these vegetables make a very good snack or can be added to recipes such as salads and breads. They are very high in many minerals including iron and zinc and will also provide protein.

### Pumpkin & Ginger Teabread

Lovely and moist, great for the lunchbox.



Nutritious: Pumpkin & Ginger Teabread.

► 175g butter, melted  
► 140g clear honey  
► 1 large egg, beaten  
► 250g raw peeled pumpkin butternut squash, coarsely grated  
► 100g light muscovado sugar  
► 350g self-raising flour

► 3 tbsp grated ginger  
► 2 tbsp demerara sugar

### Method

► Preheat the oven to 180C/gas 4/fan 160C. Butter and line the base and two long sides of a 1.5kg loaf tin with a strip of baking paper.

► Mix the butter, honey and egg and stir in the pumpkin or squash. Then mix in the sugar, flour and ginger.

► Pour into the prepared tin and sprinkle the top with the demerara sugar. Bake for 50-60 minutes, until risen and golden brown. Leave in the tin for 5 minutes, then turn out and cool on a wire rack. Serve thickly sliced and buttered.





SEND YOUR FITNESS & HEALTH IDEAS AND QUERIES TO: EDITORIAL@SPORT360.COM

#### **Pumpkin, Feta & Walnut stuffed Aubergines**

- ▶ 2 large aubergines
- ▶ 200g/7oz pumpkin or squash
- ▶ 100g red onions, thinly sliced
- ▶ 1 tsp ground cumin
- ▶ 2 garlic cloves, thinly sliced
- ▶ 4 tbsp virgin olive oil
- ▶ 2 tsp fresh herbs (thyme, oregano, sage or rosemary work well)
- ▶ 100g feta cheese, diced
- ▶ large handful walnuts

#### **Method**

- ▶ Heat oven to 200C/180C fan/gas 6. Cut the aubergines in half lengthways, leaving the stem in place (this can be removed when eating). Using a small sharp knife,

scoop out the inner flesh leaving a shell about 1cm thick. Chop the flesh and put into a bowl.

- ▶ Peel the pumpkin or squash, remove the seeds, then cut into 1-2cm dice and mix with the chopped aubergine and red onion. Mix in the cumin, garlic and 2 tbsp oil and toss together with some salt and black pepper. Lay on a baking tray lined with parchment paper. Rub 1 tbsp oil over the aubergine halves and season. Place, cut-side down, on another tray lined with parchment paper. Bake for 15-20 mins, until the pumpkin and aubergine shells are almost cooked through.

- ▶ Tip the pumpkin mixture back

into the bowl and stir through the mixed herbs, feta and walnuts. Turn over the aubergine halves, then pile up the mixture inside. Drizzle with the remaining 1 tbsp oil and bake for 20 mins. (Recipes inspired from back issues of the Good Food magazine.)

.....  
 Josie is a Pilates and yoga instructor with over 25 years experience. She has a studio in Mohammed Bin Zayed City, Abu Dhabi where she teaches small groups and sees private clients. For more info see [www.yogapilatesabudhabi.com](http://www.yogapilatesabudhabi.com), or call 050 3285 770.

## SPA LISTINGS

### ZAYNA SPA, GRAND MILLENNIUM HOTEL, AL WAHDA

#### **Members day**

Every Monday and Thursday Grand Millennium welcomes members of Al Wahda Health Club & Zayna Spa to take advantage of a 50% discount off any treatment and take time out to re-



lax or get physical and feel great at the gym or any of our facilities.

#### **Ladies Day**

Every Sunday and Tuesday, ladies are invited to pamper themselves with our 30% off special on all treatments.

#### **Early Bird Discounts**

Enjoy 50% discount off any treatment and relax as our expert spa technicians whisk you away on a journey of rest and relaxation with services including facials, scrub or wrap for your specific skin type, aromatherapy and other high-end treatments to suit everyone, male or female. Daily between 10:00 AM - 2:00 PM

#### **Spring Special Promotion**

90 Mins aromatherapy massage & express facial or anti stress back massage and moor mud wrap for 620 AED.

\*Prices are subject to 10% Service Charge and 6% Tourism Fee. Reservations: +971 2 495 3822  
**E-mail:** [zaynaspa@grandmill-alwahda.com](mailto:zaynaspa@grandmill-alwahda.com)

### ZEN THE SPA AT FUJAIRAH ROTANA RESORT & SPA

Awarded UAE's Best Luxury Resort Spa, Zen The Spa offers its clients the chance to be exposed to



treatments derived from holistic Asian philosophies. With 17 treatment rooms and one private VIP Serenity Suite, equipped with a luxurious built-in hydrotherapy jet bath and relaxation areas, the 1,400 sqm spa is definitely the place to get into a soothing mood.



Not forgetting to mention, the menu which includes exceptional treatments such as detoxifying body envelopment with detox gel and deep body cleansing with traditional black soap.  
**Tel:** 09 204 2138

### RADISSON BLU YMC

The Spa offers professional

services coupled with personal attention in an exclusive environment with world-class facilities. Professionally trained spa therapists will help guests choose the perfect treatment based on individual needs. The Health Club has all the latest gym equipment.



Guests also have access to a tennis court and running tracks around the Yas Marina Circuit.  
**Tel:** 02 656 2000

### ZEN THE SPA AT ROTANA

Zen the Spa takes you through a journey that leads you to a greater understanding of spa rituals. Indulge yourself with the most pampering experience you'll ever take and align your body, mind and spirit. Treatment of the Month: Rasul Mud Therapy  
 Opening Hours: The spa is open daily from 10am to 10pm

**Tel:** 02 697 9333

**Email:** [zen.beach@rotana.com](mailto:zen.beach@rotana.com)

### BALANCE WELLNESS CENTRE

Infusing the ancient principles of Ayurveda and yoga with modern therapeutic techniques, Balance treatments are guaranteed to offer holistic satisfaction. Following a 360 degree healing philosophy that encompasses all aspects of life, Balance specialises in



yoga, Pilates, diet, meditation and therapeutic massages. The 65 bespoke therapies integrate techniques from across the world, including: Tibet, India, Japan, Thailand, Indonesia and China. Website: [www.balance-wellness-centre.com](http://www.balance-wellness-centre.com), Facebook.com/BalanceWellness360.  
**Tel:** 04 384 7010/11

### BYBLOS HOTEL THAI CHI SPA

Located on second floor of the Byblos Hotel in Tecom, the Thai Chi Spa gives you a chance to refresh the mind, body and soul.



Relax and experience traditional Thai massages, tailor-made to every guest's needs and focus on gaining a perfect balance. The ambience is charming and inviting. The spa is open daily from 9am to 12am.

**Tel:** 04 448 8000

[www.bybloshoteldubai.com](http://www.bybloshoteldubai.com)