

What's old is new again in fitness world

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NEW YORK (AP) - **Martha Zamirski** had tried almost every fitness fad: pole dancing, spinning, step aerobics.

"I never saw results," said the 26-year-old who lives in [New York City](#). "I thought something was wrong with me."

But earlier this year, Zamirski, managing director of a nonprofit theater company, gave up the pole, the bike and the step for a basic boot camp workout. So far, she has lost 20 pounds and dropped two dress sizes.

"I can see my abs now," she said. "I have definition in my arms, definition in my legs. Everything kind of tightened."



She's among a growing number of people who are forgoing Bowflex machines, trampoline classes and "[Dancing with the Stars](#)" workouts in favor of a back-to-basics strategy. They're emphasizing traditional exercises including pull-ups and old-fashioned tools such as kettlebells _ something like a cannonball with a handle.

Simpler is sometimes better, said Michele Olson, who teaches a kettlebell class and is also a professor of physical education and exercise science at Auburn University at Montgomery. The fitness tool, used for centuries in [Russia](#), has become one of the hottest new workouts in the [U.S.](#)

And sales of Perfect Pushup, manufacturer of fitness tools that assist people with push ups and pull ups, are climbing, with 3 million units sold so far.

"The reason we keep coming back to basic workouts is because the movements are simple enough for everybody to do yet still highly effective," said Michelle Khai, of Miami Beach, [Fla.](#), creator of Kettlenetics Slim&Tone System, a kettlebell dance workout. "This makes it accessible, doable and frees you up to have fun with it."

With the economic downturn, people are looking for ways to save time and money. The number of gym memberships dropped 3 percent to 41.5 million between 2006 and 2007, according to the International Health, Racquet and Sportsclub Association.

Kettlebells range from about \$25 to \$300, depending on the weight and shipping costs, said Khai. The Perfect Pushup is \$39.95.

"Sometimes I think to myself it would be great to go to the gym," said Julie Kuehl, 46, of Greensburg, [Ind.](#), who has a Perfect Pullup and Perfect Pushup. "But really I can do everything I need to do right here with these two little things."

Credit the kettlebell boom to Pavel Tsatsouline, who was a special forces trainer in the former [Soviet Union](#) and once a nationally ranked kettlebell lifter. The fitness guru developed the world's first kettlebell instructor certification program.

Moves can be fast, such as swinging a kettlebell between the legs and popping it explosively, or slower, such as the press, said Mark Cheng, a Russian Kettlebell Challenge Team Leader. Some kettlebell exercises, like the kossack, even resemble stretches.

"This is sort of like yoga on speed," said Cheng, of [Los Angeles](#). "If it's done properly it should give you all your strength training, all your stretching and flexibility and all your cardio with one tool. Your gym could take up as little as one cubic foot."

And while the workout looks like something for serious body builders, non-athletes and children are using the fitness tool, which can be as light as 4 pounds.

The workouts are tough, said Meri Moody, 56, a housewife in [Montgomery, Ala.](#), who takes Olson's kettlebell class. She said the appeal for her is the combination of strength training and cardio in a single session.

And while none of this may sound as fun as dancing the pounds away, Zamirski said the fun in boot camp is challenging herself to do more push ups to run faster.

"I couldn't run before I started," she said. "Now I'm running like mad."

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