

PILATES

The Balanced Body® Newsletter

CORETERLY



Jill Harris holds a Bachelor's degree from UC-Davis and has been teaching Pilates since 1996. She taught jazz dance classes and performed with various dance groups around the Bay Area.

Her teaching has evolved into a blend of methodologies and incorporates elements of personal training, dance, massage and physical therapy. She credits Pilates for making her body stronger and her will more resilient with each passing year of practice.

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FROM THE STUDIO

Taking Pilates Home

by Jill Harris

Ask any chef what are the most important tools for cooking and they will say a good knife, a food processor, and a great set of pots and pans. Ask any Pilates teacher what are the most important tools for a successful home practice and they will say a resistance-band, a stability ball, 3-5lb weights and a foam roller. A chef will refer to recipes, make notes and changes, and adjust their dishes each time they create them. Like a chef, a trainer has recipes for each client's workouts and will make notes and tweaks along the way to get the best results.

To call myself a chef would be a joke of epic proportions, but I do share a lot of similarities in my approach to my client's home exercise programs. Encouraging your clients to continue working at home on exercises that are similar to what you've just done with them in their session, can help them achieve greater results. They will learn the exercises more quickly, and see faster progression than a once a week visit can gain alone.

Building a Pilates recipe...

To build my "recipe book," I subscribe to multiple health and fitness magazines. Each month I comb through *Pilates Style*, *Women's Health*, *Shape*, *Self* and a whole host of other titles looking for new moves to share with my clients. When something looks interesting, I tear out the page and evaluate it based on the following:

1. How similar is this to Pilates exercises my clients already know?
2. Are they easy to follow?
3. How safe is this for my client?
4. How will this help my client get stronger or more flexible?
5. Are these exercises enhancing their workout?
6. Are these good exercises for travel?
7. Can these exercises be modified to fit their current skill level?
8. Can these exercises increase in intensity as my client gains strength?

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Once the exercises or workout routines pass my inspection, they go into a plastic sleeve in a “recipe binder.” I now have my answers in one place. This resource is also super easy to photocopy to give to clients for their home use. It is my answer to the proverbial question “what should I do today?” At my studio, this binder gets as much use from my colleagues as the standard Pilates reference books like *The Anatomy of Movement* and *Rael Pilates*.

Speaking a simple language

When working with clients, I use traditional names for exercises like “chest expansion” or “kneeling side arms,” where the magazines might call these “triceps tighteners” or “shoulder shapers.” Bottom line is we are all doing similar movements, just calling them something else. Speaking a language our clients can relate to is what is going to motivate them to practice on their own.

For example, a food magazine might call a sauce an aioli which is far sexier than mayonnaise. Likewise, butt buster sounds more enticing than bridges. The easiest way to connect the dots between what a client learns in the studio and what they are seeing in the photograph is to provide the Pilates terminology for the exercise which is most similar. This way they understand the technique behind the exercise and can draw from their experiences working with a trainer correcting them. Hopefully, they will combine the photo, the notes and muscle memory to create a safe and effective home practice.

A “menu” of exercises

All home exercise menus should contain the following items (these are just some examples I like to use):

1. Appetizers – this is the warm up. Exercises can include bridges, coccyx curls, neck curls, ribcage arms, cat/cow. These exercises can be spiced up by adding a resistance-band or stability ball.
2. First course – the body is just starting to get stimulated and muscles are ready to be challenged. Use a resistance-band for exercises such as roll-ups, leg circles, rolling like a ball and double leg stretches.
3. Main course – this is the focal point of any meal and the same will hold true for a home program. Add in weights to do the swan, or beef up the side leg series by adding a rotator cuff exercise with the clam legs and arm swings opposite the leg kicks. Finish off with teasers of any level. The weights will pose a tasty challenge.
4. Dessert – this is the sweetest portion of the workout. Use a foam roller at this point for stretching out the arms, pecs, and legs. Do arm circles ten times in each direction then go into a chicken wing stretch. Slide off the roller and place it under the small of your back with your legs to the ceiling. Start scissor kicking the legs and get a tasty stretch for your hamstrings and hip flexors.

The perfect home program contains all the essential tools, a variety of recipes, and a balanced menu to satisfy a client’s appetite to grow and achieve strength and flexibility. The menu needs to be altered periodically to accommodate any palate changes the client encounters. Always keep workouts fresh and innovative and your clients will keep coming back for more.