



on your feet:

Salsa into summer

It's that time of year when your New Year's resolution to make regular visits to the gym is becoming tiresome. It's not as freezing outside as it was, yet summer still seems a long way off. There isn't a lot of motivation to get out and exercise. Which is why this is the ideal season to try something new to shake off those winter cobwebs. **Kate Maynard** tries sizzling salsa to beat away the winter blues.

Salsa dancing in the UK today can be found in virtually every town and even village hall. It's not as disciplined as all the ballroom antics we see on the TV, and you don't need to be stick thin or an experienced dancer to be good at it. Classes are often followed by an 'open floor' where people with all different levels of skill can dance together (and learn from each other) while also pausing for a drink and chat.

Some aspiring salsa dancers may be reluctant to join a class because they can't find a partner, but you don't actually need one. If you can't collar your partner or coax a friend, just turn up on your own and you certainly won't be the only one going solo. Indeed, salsa events are a great way to meet new people. Even if you do have a pal with a shared interest, most salsa classes involve constantly swapping dance partners, which is important when you're learning to synchronise your moves.

Many salsa classes involve turning up when you can, so you're free to try one out without paying for a whole course. Both men and women should wear a smooth-soled leather shoe so that you can swivel and step with ease – trainers are too clumsy and can stick – and women should have only low heels to begin with. Wear comfortable clothes that are easy to

move about in and which you won't feel too hot in once you get moving. Salsa is a real workout, after all!

Salsa is a really good form of exercise because you're not focusing on how many miles you've cycled on the spot or sit-ups you've subjected your poor abs to. The movement improves your fitness and burns calories and meanwhile you're toning your legs, improving your flexibility and may even lose weight.

At a beginners' salsa class everyone will be in the same boat as you, so don't worry that you won't be able to keep up or coordinate legs, arms and partner. The main thing is to move at your own pace and keep attending the same class until you're certain of the basics and ready to move on. You might even like to try different teachers and classes until you find something that suits you.

If you can avoid looking at your own feet and manage not to get trodden on, you've made a good start! Things can only improve from there. A feeling of wellbeing from all that moving to music while also acquiring a new skill is almost guaranteed. Perhaps a holiday to Barcelona or the Canary Islands to show off your new skills might be on the cards this year?

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