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How to get those arms in shape? Krank it up.



Ray Sherwin and Kelly Maraghy in a Kranking class at the Sports Club/LA in Boston. Sherwin said he noticed greater muscle definition almost immediately. (DAVID KAMERMAN/GLOBE STAFF)

By Linda Laban - Globe Correspondent / **June 19, 2008**

"It's only half an hour, but it's really hard," warns the Sports Club/LA's group exercise manager Alexa Malzone. She's talking about the new Kranking class she teaches. "Your arms will feel like they're going to drop off after."

Summer is approaching, and with it, body-baring fashions that draw attention to all those parts that go jiggly when not attended to. Hips, thighs, and bellies have long been targeted by workout classes; now upper arms and shoulders are getting their due. Kranking, developed by spinning guru Johnny G., is an upper-body cardio program that uses an arm-operated stationary cycle: the Krankcycle.

"Right now, this is the hottest class out there," says Malzone, 31, who became an early convert after studying Johnny G.'s "Book of Kranking" and doing four hours of training. "After using this machine I told the instructor, 'I am humbled by the Krankcycle.' There's a lot of science behind this piece of equipment. It's not just thrown together to be cool."

When the Krankcycle became available this spring, Sports Club/LA snapped up 10 for the Boston branch and now offers four Kranking classes each week.

Kranking doesn't look especially cool, but it does look simple. Surprise: It's not. The machine's Krankarms work independently so that one cannot assist the other. Nor do the arms remain synchronized without concentration and coordination. Because of that,

the machine works all the muscles of the upper body, as well as core muscles, and can be used with one or both arms while sitting, standing, or standing on one leg.

"The possibilities for a complex mind-body workout are almost endless," says Malzone. On a less metaphysical note, she adds: "Women are looking for ways to tone the arms and look better in sundresses and tanks. With Kranking, this," she says, grabbing that wobbly bit on the upper arm, "is gone."

The best thing about Kranking is that almost anyone can do it, no matter what his or her fitness level. Also, as the exercise can be done sitting down, it's low impact. As Malzone puts it, "I can do it, my grandma can do it."

For beginners, Sports Club/LA's Krank It class introduces students to turning the Krankarms correctly. From there, they move onto Krank It Up With Legs!, Krank It Up With Cardio!, or Krank It Up With Core! And, yes, those exclamation points in the titles indicate the energy level of the classes.

"I'm dying now," exclaims Kelly Maraghy, 29, flushed and glowing after the Krank It Up With Legs! workout. "That was really good."

It's Maraghy's first Kranking class. She wanted to add something different to her exercise regime. She's tried spinning, but didn't enjoy it. "This is better because it's low impact," she says. "I have a knee injury, so I don't want to stress the joint."

Ray Sherwin, 49, was on his fourth class and says he noticed greater muscle definition almost immediately. "It's hard at first, using your arms is weird. After the first class I was a bit sore, but after the second I saw that I was toned," he says. "I have a neck problem, so I can't lift weights. So this is perfect."

Sports Club/LA, 4 Avery St., Boston.

617-375-8200. thesportsclubla.com■

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Upper class(es)

Looking for other classes that will get your upper body taut, toned, and tank-top ready?

BodyScapes Fitness (1285 Beacon St., Brookline. 617-232-1010. bodyscapesfitness.com) created a Tank Top Toning package, which uses free weights and upper body exercises to strengthen biceps, triceps, chest, upper back, and core.

Boston Body Works Studios (38 Newbury St., Boston. 617-723-8090. bostonbodyworksstudios.com) boasts the Gyrotonic machine, which uses weights and pulleys and adds Pilates and yoga principles. It increases flexibility and strength, particularly in the core and upper body. - LINDA LABAN