



Give in to the Yin

Yoga isn't just about the sun salutations and dancer's poses for the super-flexible among us: One Dubai-based teacher is on a mission to help people realise that it really *can* be for everyone no matter what your level is, with her unique approach.

By Yi-Hwa Hanna

Step into Linda Chambers Cochrane's Crossover2Yoga class—currently held three times a week at The Warehouse Gym—and you'd be surprised to see that this isn't your stereotypical yoga class, at all. While yoga has become a bit of a trend in recent years, with plenty of bikini-clad, kale-eating and detox juice-drinking babes contorting their lithe bodies into impossibly flexible looking poses all over your Instagram feed (don't get us wrong, we love it as much as the next yogi does), for the less flexible among us, it can make it even more intimidating than it was in the past. And that's what Linda is here to change with her special brand of yoga, designed for athletes of all sorts as well as the everywoman (or man).

"Being very active myself and having worked in the industry for 15 years [Ed's Note: Linda is not only a qualified yoga instructor, she's also a Les Mills DVD Presenter and Master Trainer], I found myself always finishing my Strength or HIIT sessions with long held yoga poses to help me "feel better." I studied traditional Hatha yoga in Goa in 2010, but had been practicing it for over 10 years. It was interesting how someone like myself, who was super fast paced, competitive and all about results, was being drawn to the least energetic and slowest form of yoga. As I lay on the various gym floors and looked around, I started to think about how I could "prescribe" certain poses to the power lifters, runners and desk-bound corporate types, that could help them perform better and feel great just as I did," she says, continuing: "I wanted to get more athletes to "CrossOver2Yoga" and this is how the name was created." Since she launched her classes, Linda has said it's been amazing to see the variety of people who have come along, from Crossfit athletes to pro swimmers, and even the fast-paced yogi

who just needed to slow down. Full disclosure: I'm one of them. A longtime yogi myself, Linda's class was unlike any other I'd experienced, not just because physically it was helping to unwind the intense and fast-paced or brutal sports I'm used to battering my body with, but interestingly, because it also noticeably helped calm my mind down, creating more of a balance between my yin and yang energies. "Nothing beats the look on everyone's face at the end of a session—it's a look of accomplishment, release, and bliss," Linda says.

The Crossover2Yoga method draws its origins from several key concepts: First, it focuses on the importance of mobility for athletes—and by that, Linda means everyone who is active, rather than just professional athletes—especially given the recent rise in popularity of activities that force athletes to repeatedly push their bodies to their limits. Second, it also incorporates the many benefits of fascial release and yin yoga, which Linda found herself researching extensively after experiencing them for herself. The method integrates all of the above into a single training method that can improve our movement quality in many major movement patterns. It also aims to help improve athletic performance through breathing strategies taken from yoga principles.

"Taking the above into consideration, the aim of this programme is to encourage athletes not to treat their athletic training, mobility exercise and yoga as three different concepts, but instead, to "crossover" all three of them into one unified method, and to use specific yoga practice to complement their other movement strategies.

Yin yoga, which is a core part of Crossover2Yoga, is the methodology used to bring about the release in connective tissue, or fascia. "Rather than 'stretching' our muscles, here



SLEEPING PUPPY

> Why? This is great for mobilising the shoulders. It provides a deep stretch for the upper and mid back too. This pose can also help to release the diaphragm, which in turn allows us to breathe more freely and deeply.

> How? Start on your hands and knees and walk your hands forward until your elbows touch the ground and your chest is close to the ground too. Keep your sit bones directly over your knees and try to not compress the lower back. To feel a greater stretch, move the elbows further forwards and bring your hands up towards the sky or rest them on shoulders or even on the ground in front of you.

> How long for? It's a good idea to rest between poses and mobilise the spine when needed, integrating Child's pose, Downward-Dog and Cat-Cow when and where relevant. Even just taking 1-2 of these poses and taking 10 mins of your day to work through them will create a change in how you move and feel in a very short space of time.



DRAGON

> Why? A deep hip and groin opener that also releases the back leg's quadriceps and hip flexors. There are many variations for all levels and to allow deeper work into the hip socket.

> How? Start in Down Dog or on hands and knees, and step one foot between the hands, either having knee over ankle or taking the foot further forward to deepen the stretch. Hands can go either side of the front foot for beginners or both hands inside of the foot. Again depending on ones mobility, you could come down onto the forearms and even add a small rotation towards the front leg. As with all the poses, allow gravity to pull the hips down and try to take your weight out of the arms and shoulders, a great Yin pose for all athletes.

> How long for? 3-5 minutes each side.



Get-Fit Tricks

we apply pressure to the connective tissue in order to gain more strength and elasticity over time, which eventually gives us a better range of movement, which then translates to more strength. Each pose is held for a minimum of three minutes in order for these results to be achievable, and can be held for up to five or seven minutes once patience and tolerance has been built up. Lately, we have seen more and more research and studies around this and many new products to aid self myofascial release, so the need and importance is definitely here," Linda says.

Then there's that energy aspect we talked about—the yin energy. What exactly does this mean, you might wonder? "Yin is the feminine, dark, passive, receptive, reflective,



STRADDLE POSE

> **Why?** This is a hip-opener. It's great for your inner thighs (adductors) and is very calming and relaxing.

> **How?** Slide right up to a wall until your buttocks touches the wall; it's best to start on your side. Then roll over onto your back and send legs up along the wall. Gradually separate your legs until you start to feel the inner thighs gently stretching. If you feel you need a little more support, place your hands on your outer legs.

> **How long for?** 3-5 mins.

COBBLER POSE

> **Why?** It opens up the lower back, hips and adductors.

> **How?** Sitting with the soles of the feet touching and knees apart, gently roll your back onto the floor. Take your arms overhead and hold your wrists or forearms. Don't force the knees to the ground; allow them to drop naturally so the stretch is felt gently.

> **How?** 3-5 mins.



Holding poses for several minutes with no distractions teaches us to relax. We begin to release tension deep in our muscles.

withdrawn, cool and more introspective aspects of life," Linda explains, continuing: "Yin yoga was developed to penetrate deep into connective tissue, expanding flexibility, focusing on static movement, breath work (pranayama) and meditation, to create a profoundly deep and rewarding practice. The primary difference between yin yoga and many other forms of yoga is that you are encouraged to *not* use your muscles, and passive poses are held for several minutes." And the benefits are boundless. "Have you ever been driving, and a flood of new ideas or memories come to you?"

Typically, this happens to many of us when we are removed from our distractions and our mind has the opportunity to relax. This is similar to what happens with yin yoga," Linda

says. "Without the distraction of constant movement and muscle engagement, your connective tissue has the opportunity to stretch and you are able to go much deeper into a pose. In addition, as poses are held for several minutes, your body is able to move beyond the 30 seconds it takes for muscles

to relax and for stretching to occur," Linda says. Static stretching is excellent to increase range of motion, she explains: "Therefore if you are tight due to repetitive movement from other sport activities or your day job keeps you in the same position eight hours a day or your body has

aged (because, yes it will do that), yin yoga will help stretch it out." It's also immensely helpful for reducing stress in both the body and mind, since holding poses for several minutes without distraction teaches us to relax. "We begin to release tension that is deeply ingrained in our muscles," she says. As for whether it's for you, Linda firmly believes that it's for everyone. Although it's beneficial to anyone, this form of yoga is said to be especially helpful for individuals with decreased range of motion or injury, senior citizens, and athletes. More flexibility, less stress and a happier mind and body, no sweat? Count us in. •



Crossover2Yoga classes are currently available at The Warehouse Gym and Talise Fitness at Madinat Jumeirah. Linda is also publishing her own e-book and guide on the subject, with explanations, workouts and more. Find out more by following @crossover2yoga or @lichi_fit on social media.

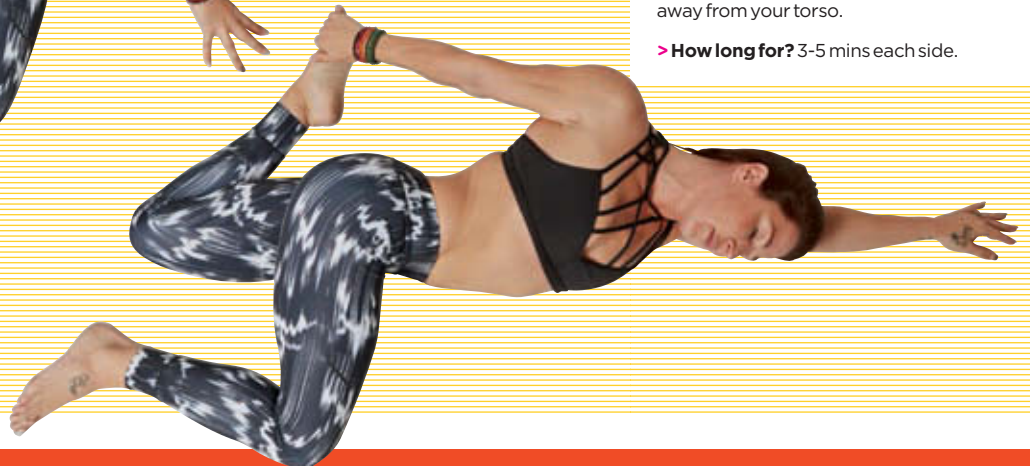


SWAN & SLEEPING SWAN

> Why? This is one of the most common yoga poses for mobility that increases range of motion at the hip joint. It also creates a strong external rotation of the front hip which brings release to front thigh and buttock. This pose really allows you to be as heavy as possible and let gravity assist the release.

> How? There are many ways to come into this pose. Start on all fours and slide one knee towards the same hand. You may need to lean to the side slightly to enable this. Try and centre your weight in the pelvis. As you lean forward with your body make sure your knee is outside your waist so you don't lean on to the thigh. To feel this more in the buttock area slide your foot away from you slightly and if you feel any knee discomfort bring your heel closer to your groin.

> How long for? 3-5 mins each side.



CAT PULLING ITS TAIL

> Why? This is a great upper-thigh opener and quadricep release for your back leg. It also opens the shoulder joint and assists in pectoral release for your top arm.

> How? Lying on your side, lengthen your bottom arm and rest your head on it. Keep the bottom leg straight as you bend the top leg and bring it forward, so your knee is as high as your hip. Now bend your bottom leg, bringing your heel towards your buttock and gently hold your foot. Try pulling your foot away from your torso.

> How long for? 3-5 mins each side.