

Personal Trainer Juliana Campos lets us into her secrets about using Ramadan to benefit your body



Personal Trainer:

JULIANA CAMPOS

“*Ramadan is the Perfect Time to Workout and Detox!*”

- We hear you spent some time in Abu Dhabi?

Yes, I worked there for three years as a personal trainer to local VIPs, including senior members of the Royal Family. Some of them still like me to visit them, to check on their routines and give them some intensive workouts. And you know what? Ramadan's the perfect time to do it! The fasting is a great opportunity for a detox, and it also makes the exercise much more effective.

- So is Ramadan all work for you, or do you enjoy it too?

Oh yes, going to the UAE for Ramadan is a lot of fun! It's my way of keeping in touch with Muslim culture. In fact Ramadan is one of my favourite times of the year.

- Did you experience Muslim traditions when you were young? Not at all, I was born in Rio de Janeiro and I had a typical Brazilian upbringing! I learnt to swim on Copacabana beach, and after that I became a professional swimmer and gymnast. I also practise the Brazilian martial art called capoeira.

- We hear you're dancer too?

Dance is very important to me. I've been Samba Queen at the Rio Carnival, and at the Notting Hill Carnival in London, where I'm now based. So I've spent time in different parts of the world, but it was only when I was working in Abu Dhabi that I realised how important Ramadan can be for your body.

- You said the fasting helped not just with detox but with exercise too?

Absolutely. I normally run my sessions an hour before Iftar – that's the perfect time for burning any excess fat from your body, and also for renewing cells. Then, after a cool-down, you have a lovely and healthy meal waiting for you – a true blessing!

- Yes, you must get really hungry after a hard workout on an empty stomach!

Sometimes your body might seem like it's crying out for fatty, salty and sweet foods – but you should avoid the temptation to give in to them. One of the secrets to training during Ramadan is to avoid using weights, and avoid over-training. If you do too much your hunger will be extreme and you'll find yourself over-eating afterwards. Your meals should be normal-sized and nutritious, with plenty of berries, vegetables, beans, lentils and grains. Avocados are also good, and you can use coconut oil for cooking.

- Why are these foods important?

Healthy carbohydrates and healthy fats – which you find in avocados and coconut oil – all help prevent muscle breakdown when you're training hard. But anyway, all year round it's essential to be properly nourished – a healthy diet shows in your skin and hair as well as your body shape.

- Can you have lamb or chicken dishes occasionally?

I have a mantra: 'meat's a treat for twice a week'. It's important to eat things we like, but some things should be in moderation! The main thing is to eat lean and clean. Oh, and don't forget Sahoor! That's very important because it keeps you going through the day.

- And how about liquids?

Try to avoid caffeinated drinks like coffee and tea, as well as energy drinks and colas – but always drink plenty of water. Not only does it keep you hydrated, it'll also flush out waste products.

- How often should you train during Ramadan?

I usually recommend 3-4 times a week – or 5 times if someone is really disciplined. Ramadan is just long enough that the workouts can become a habit, part of your daily routine. At the end of the month you should find it more difficult to stop than to carry on with your new healthy habits!



Will all this really make a difference?

I've seen so many of my clients transformed over Ramadan by my workouts and healthy eating. In fact, even as a Brazilian I fasted one Ramadan, and I felt like a new me! Not only did I lose weight, but my skin and my hair shone, and my energy levels were through the roof.

- Can you give our readers some exercise tips for Ramadan?

Of course! Here are some photos here of me doing the workout on the beach in Abu Dhabi. That's the thing – you don't need to go to a gym – all you need are some steps and a chair! So let's get started! First of all, the warm up. You can do that to your favourite song, just dancing – as long as it's energetic! Or you can do star jumps to the music.

1. Then the first exercise is the lunge – do 3 sets of 10 for each leg.
2. Next, some tricep press-ups, lifting one leg at a time.
3. Follow that by trying some hand-stands against a wall – in your bedroom for example. You can do 5 of those.
4. Then some crunches – basically sit-ups – ideally on a Swiss Ball, but the floor is fine too. For this one you should do 4 sets of 25.
5. Next you need some stairs – trot up 5 steps, and down 5 steps.
6. For the single leg bridge you just need a chair – do 3 sets of 10 for each leg.
7. And for the wheel you need an old lorry tyre and some outside space. Do 5 sets and it'll really strengthen your abs.
8. Finally, do 100 "sit-up twists" with a kettlebell – or just a bag of rice – going side to side and touching the floor each time.

- And then you've really enjoyed your Iftar! Juliana, do you have any final words for our readers?

Only Ramadan Mubarak!

For more information on Juliana Campos please see:

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