

The Korea Herald

Actress shares her passion for 'Pure Yoga'.

2 August 2003

By Krista Kim Contributing writer Yoga is in, and celebrity endorsements by Madonna and Demi Moore show that striking a pose is more chic than pumping iron. In Korea, celebrity Choi Yun-young introduced Korea to the yoga fitness craze last year, being the first to release a workout video entitled, "Yoga in India." Now fully sharing her passion for yoga, Choi recently opened a studio called Pure Yoga, in Cheongdam-dong, southern Seoul. "Our program of yoga is called 'Bikram' yoga, where the workout room is heated up to 38 degrees Celsius. This kind of yoga allows more stretching because the muscles are more relaxed in the heat. You also use 90 percent of your lungs, whereas in normal room temperature, you only use 10 percent.

There are 26 poses in total for a 90-minute class, and people lose a lot of weight," explained Choi in an interview with The Korea Herald. It sounds arduous, but because Koreans demand instant gratification, this program is designed for the quickest, most effective way of seeing results. With state-of-the-art facilities and spacious interior design, Pure Yoga is one of the trendiest workout studio in Seoul. Celebrities like Oh Jei-hyung and Ahn Sun-young are flocking to Pure Yoga to be a part of the yoga experience. "At first, the program was really hard, because it's so hot in the room, but after the first class, every other class gets better and better, and you feel your body stretching further and getting stronger ... I love it and I'm hooked," Oh commented. In order to find the

best instructors in Korea for her studio, Choi traveled to California and interviewed over 300 applicants. She hired two full time Korean-American instructors who conduct the classes in English. "I want people to know that it's never too late to begin. Your body will start to change shape. You will begin to see your waistline. Most Korean women want an hourglass figure and yoga helps to achieve that by working the long muscles in the body. I'm 44, and I'm feeling better and younger than ever," said Sunny, an instructor at Pure Yoga. Choi keeps a demanding schedule as an actor on the KBS drama, "The Angel and the Con Artist," airing Wednesdays and Thursdays at 9:55 p.m. on SBS. Despite only two hours of sleep on some weeknights between TV appearances, Choi always has a vibrant, healthy glow. "When you are young and you're still healthy, you don't really know the benefits of yoga. You think it's cool and chic. I came back to Korea in 2000, but because I was working all the time, I was getting frustrated, and I started to work out again," said Choi. When her Indian yoga instructor left the country, she had no place to continue working out. Out of necessity, Choi opened Pure Yoga. She has since developed the studio's own yoga program and even launched her own yoga-wear line. "I received messages that my video changed people's lives, and made them feel healthier and happier. I was very glad to hear that I gave back to society, and so I want to continue that through the school and future projects dealing with health and wellness," Choi said. (kristakim@heraldm.com)