

fit



Guinea Pig | Not Just the Flax, Ma'am

Flaxseed is full of omega-3 fatty acids, which can lower cholesterol levels and reduce the risk of dying from heart disease. Flaxseed also tastes like cardboard, so it's not much fun to consume on its own. Linwoods' new line of ground flaxseed adds nuts, berries, pumpkin seeds, cocoa and other tasty ingredients to the flavor-challenged super-food. Our tester found the mix palatable enough to eat by the spoonful. Each 12- to 15-oz. bag sells for \$15.67 on Linwoodshealthfoods.com.

Rocket's Taking Off

A form of Ashtanga yoga lets you skip ahead of tricky poses catches on in the area

How do you turn Ashtanga yoga, one of the most physically demanding forms of the practice, into something everyone can do? "It's not rocket science," says instructor Peg Mulqueen. It's just Rocket, a style of yoga that borrows from Ashtanga's strict progression of postures but doesn't stick to the usual script. In Ashtanga, you perform a specific series until you hit a pose you can't manage to twist yourself into or hold yourself up in. Then you're stuck. You can't continue until you've mastered the move. "Rocket takes these roadblocks out," explains fellow



Rocket provides opportunities to try various arm balances (like the eight-angle pose, above), but don't worry if you can't stay up.

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— PEG MULQUEEN, ROCKET INSTRUCTOR

instructor Mimi Reiger. Problem positions are subtracted entirely, or substituted with variations, so you can move on. As Mulqueen's daughter says, "It's Ashtanga without the stupid poses."

HISTORY LESSON: Rocket was created in the 1980s by Larry Shultz, a California-based instructor known as the "bad man of Ashtanga" for his habit of skipping ahead in the series. Some of his earliest students were members of the band the Grateful Dead, and it was musician Bob Weir who came



Peg Mulqueen adjusts student Faith Hunter, who's also a D.C. yoga teacher.

up with a name for the practice — "because it gets you there faster," Mulqueen explains. It caught on

in San Francisco at Shultz's It's Yoga studio and at affiliated studios around the globe. But Rocket didn't take off in D.C. until about a year ago, when the first area teacher training prepared a group of local instructors. That crew included Mulqueen and Reiger, who are leading the push to make Rocket a regular offering at studios across the city.

PREPARING TO LAUNCH:

It was a task that could have been as daunting as Supta Vajrasana (an Ashtanga pose that involves sitting in lotus position, crossing your arms behind your back and grabbing your feet with your hands while lowering your upper body to the ground). "Rocket yoga has been Ashtanga's red-headed stepchild," Mulqueen says. But when she start-

ed a class at Tenleytown's Ashtanga Yoga Center on Sunday afternoons — not exactly prime time — it was quickly packed. Now, other studios have made space in their schedules. And as of a few weeks ago, it became possible to take a Rocket class somewhere in the city every day of the week.

WHAT TO EXPECT:

"People think of Rocket as handstands. And it is," Mulqueen says. That's because handstands (and headstands and forearm stands) are those fun things you get to rocket ahead to do. But if balancing on your palms sounds terrifying, a Rocket teacher will send you to the side of the room to do them against the wall, offer a helping hand and suggest tricks to prevent the fear of falling over. Still freaked out? Feel

Get Fired Up

Do Rocket every day of the week with classes offered at studios all across town. Here's a sampling of options.

- Vida (Vidafitness.com) offers Rocket I on Sundays at 12:30 p.m. and Mondays at 8 p.m. at its 1612 U St. NW location. Vida Metropole (1517 15th St. NW) has Rocket I on Wednesdays at 8:30 p.m. Day pass for either gym is \$25.
- The Studio DC (Thestudioc.com) offers Rocket I on Thursdays at 8 p.m. at the 1710 Connecticut Ave. NW location. Rocket II is on Tuesdays at 8 p.m. at the 2469 18th St. NW studio. Single class is \$17.
- Rocket III is Friday at 6:30 p.m. at the Ashtanga Yoga Center (4000 Albemarle St. NW; Ashtangayogadc.com). Single class is \$17.

free to sink back on your heels. "I swear to God you'll never hear an Ashtanga teacher tell you to take child's pose," Mulqueen says. But it's this more accessible approach that allows practitioners to push themselves in ways they wouldn't otherwise.

SHIPSHAPE: And no one would ever dare call Rocket easy. Level one is based on the Ashtanga primary series, level two is based on the second series, and level three is a combination of the two. So in every class, you'll get plenty of classic Ashtanga poses, including five repetitions of sun salutation A, five repetitions of sun salutation B and then a flow of moves that help you open the body, strengthen your muscles and improve your balance. "It builds so much heat," says Reiger, who was soaked with sweat along with the rest of the crowd at one of Mulqueen's recent level-three classes. Expect to be relieved when it's time to land in savasana. VICKY HALLETT (EXPRESS)