

# My Top 5 Cardio Classes in Charlotte and how they keep me motivated

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One of my favorite trainers in Charlotte – Marissa West of West Kept Secret always stresses the importance of incorporating cardio into your workouts to see results and I'm all about results. I've tried a ton of cardio classes so you don't have to and below are my favorite ways to get your heart rate up and burn some serious calories.

**Hilliard Studio Method:** Here we go again with my sister talking me into trying a new workout. I was really hesitant about trying Hilliard Studio Method because I heard typical barre classes could be slow moving and sometimes even boring. One thing about working out for me, is I can not be bored or else I will literally look at the clock every 5 seconds and expect the hour workout to be over. Well, once again, I was wrong, and Hilliard Studio Method wasn't boring, and definitely wasn't slow moving. You start your workout with your mat rolled up and heavy weights in hand (you may think two, 8 lb weights aren't heavy, but this class will quickly change your mind). The class flows through each muscle group working your biceps, triceps, inner thighs, and glutes all while giving you a high intensity, low impact workout. Next thing I know, we are in our plank/push up series. I have a love/hate relationship with this part of class. In between planks and push ups, the instructor has us do some cardio blast moves like cardio jacks and mountain climbers. After arms and mat work, we move to the barre, in my first class I thought "cool, maybe I'll start to catch my breath." Nope, I'm wrong again. The barre work brings out my inner ballerina (I was never really graceful) while continuing to work every inch of your body from your waist to your thighs, and even balance work. The instructors keep you

motivated throughout the hour while you literally shake, “reach your edge” and hold that position for an extra 5 seconds. The class continues through some glute work and more core exercises to finish out the class. I was hooked after my first class. I couldn’t wait to continue taking classes at Hilliard Studio Method and continue to see the changes my body was making (inches off my waist after just a handful of classes). When people ask what my favorite workouts are, the second I mention Hilliard Studio Method, the first thing they say wow, I heard that class was SO hard. And it is true, the class is SO hard but just like John Mellencamp said, “come on and make it hurt so good.”

CycleBar: This is not your typical cycle/spin class. This is a 45 minute intense ride to the beat and party on a bike. Cyclebar is actually what helped kickstart my fitness journey after a brief hiatus due to a foot injury that kept me from working out for 10 weeks. Cycling was a low impact way to add cardio back into my routine and I am so glad I took the leap with CycleBar. Their cycle theatre has state of the art audio, video, and lighting technology that gives you a club like vibe. The Cyclestars (instructors) create amazing playlists that you ride and dance to the beat to while basically kicking your butt with some uphill climbs and interval cycles which make the calories burn off and your body get stronger with every pedal stroke. One of my favorite things about CycleBar is when the instructor calls you out by name during the class to help keep you motivated (I know it gives me an extra boost of confidence when tapping back).

BLOC Party: Over the past 4 weeks, my business Fit Atelier had the honor of hosting a sneak peek at Katie Dixon's (Kadi Fit) latest endeavor, BLOC Party. Katie is opening up her second studio, BLOCcIt this spring in Dilworth and I could not be more excited. BLOC Party is a cardio dance class that will be on their regular schedule at BLOCcIt. Cardio dance is something I never really saw myself participating in, but my sister insisted I try it and it's hard to say no to her. My first BLOC Party class I found myself pretty nervous and had so many thoughts running through my head "what if I can't follow the choreography?" "what if I make a fool out of myself" "what are others going to think when they look at me?" Before class even started, Katie had us all circle up to tell us about what we were about to get into for the next hour and what stood out to me was "have fun, dance, and be you. No one is going to be looking at you but yourself." We also started the class by going around the room and stating our intention for the class. Mine was to make my sister happy by participating in something I didn't really feel comfortable doing. One of the quotes that fitness instructors say a lot is that change happens when you step out of your comfort zone, and sure enough that's what happened. For the next hour, the class was full of some really awesome dance moves, booty shaking, and cool choreography that was super easy to follow along (even for beginners like me). This hour long cardio workout flew by and with each week helped my confidence grow even more. I even began looking forward to Wednesday nights for the BLOC Party.

Chakti: A good friend of mine asked if I wanted to go to a hip hop yoga class with her one night. My first thought was that I'm not really into "traditional"

yoga. After asking for a little more detail, I was told this class incorporates really loud, explicit rap music, and I was like COOL, count me in. Loud, explicit rap music made me think I could re-live my college days dancing with my sorority sisters at Klondike Cafe. I walk in to the studio and am greeted by Lauren McAbee, creator of Chakti. My first impression was, "wow, she looks so cool" and upon meeting her, she is equally as nice and cool on the inside as she is on the outside. I place my mat next to my friend and as it gets closer to class time, the class is literally mat to mat with over 40 women (and an occasional male). The class begins, the music starts bumping, and next thing I know I went from downward dog to twerking. The class brings so much energy and cardio bursts, that next thing I know, along with every other person in the studio, layers were coming off and we were all dripping in sweat. In between yoga positions and twerking, Lauren incorporates cardio moves like jumping jacks and squats that make this an all-around total body cardio workout. This is yet another class that brings you out of your comfort zone. Lauren was recently quoted in an article in Charlotte magazine saying, "My hope is, when people come to the class, they leave feeling empowered and balanced." I can 100% affirm that after I leave this class each week (it is a part of my normal routine now on Monday nights) that I feel so balance, so empowered, and like I literally just burnt 1000 calories and had the most fun in the entire world.

Jamie Scott Fitness South End's "Cycle + Strength": Jamie Scott Fitness is one of the newest gyms to open up in Charlotte and I was so excited to hear that it was going to offer HIIT classes, cycle, yoga, and even recovery classe

in one location. One of my favorite cardio classes at JSF is their Cycle + Strength class which is a 45 minute cycle class followed by 15 minutes of strength training and TRX. JSF studio manager, Robert Pinka led me through my first Cycle + Strength class and I was totally hooked. The 45 minute spin class flew by. We pedaled to the beat of the music, danced, tapped back, and did push ups on the bike throughout the 45 minutes. Once the cycle portion of the class was done, we moved into the weight/TRX room where Robert led us through arm work (holy bicep burn) and even some core exercises. This class is a great way to add cardio and weights into your routine with a one stop shop.

My list of cardio workouts is always growing and changing, but these 5 are definitely a constant in my life. Looking to try one of these out? Send me a message! I LOVE introducing people to new workouts and having new friends to workout with!