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## The Transformation of Star Pilates

By Sophie Braccini



Andrea Ruotsi teaches a barre class. Photo Sophie Braccini

Star Pilates and Fitness in Moraga is undergoing a complete transformation under the new leadership of Andrea Ruotsi. The young mother lives in Moraga with her 5-year-old son, Oliver, and has the energy, training and business sense to make the studio a big success. She is adding classes and services that cater to a clientele who are looking for fun and stimulation in a casual atmosphere. Definitely not your average suburbanite, Ruotsi also has an interior design practice.

Ruotsi's business goals for Star Pilates are lofty: adding barre, yoga, TRX and spin classes, while providing morning childcare, making sure that the relaxed atmosphere is preserved, and the existing clients who come for Reformer or Pilates Mat classes don't feel pushed out of the way.

"I bought the studio last November," she says with a big smile. "I thought that this place had a lot of potential for development." Ruotsi was raised in Alamo and has lived in many different places in the United States including Reno, where she got her interior design degree, as well as New York and Los

Angeles where she worked in the design industry. She came back to the Bay Area when she decided to start a family. Throughout her life, Ruotsi was athletic, participating in soccer, track and a lot of skiing. She started teaching fitness classes in high school as an extension of her summer job as a lifeguard at Livorna pool in Alamo. She's continued teaching fitness in tandem with her interior design career, steadily building her body of knowledge and experience.

"I loved teaching so much that I always knew someday I would have my own place," Ruotsi says. "I love barre classes but I didn't want to own a barre franchise, with someone limiting what I can do. I think that the healthiest thing for everyone's body is to mix different exercises." She started teaching barre over 10 years ago, first in Marin County, then San Francisco, before coming back to the East Bay two and a half years ago. "If someone comes to my class regularly three times a week, I guarantee that person will transform their body within three months," she says.

The expansion of classes and services started at Star Pilates are all with the goal to better serve the needs of her clientele, such as opening the morning daycare that runs during the week or selling a selection of sports attire.

On the business side, she has partnered with her family. Her father is the behind-the-scenes finance officer of the company. "He was an executive and is now retired. This business endeavor is his way of fulfilling his dream of having a business, vicariously through me, and we've become very close in the process," she says. Ruotsi has always had a business acumen. Even when she was working for Anthropology in Los Angeles creating displays, besides the esthetics, she also had the drive to grow the business. "I would walk my stock room every morning and see what I owned a lot of," she remembers, "and then I would create displays around those units."

With Star Pilates, her goal is to make her space in the Moraga Center more visible. One of her first changes was the barre room that had no natural light and felt like a storage area. She removed the panels masking the very large windows, replaced the carpet with wood, and installed mirrors as well as beautiful red oak bars with custom-made stainless steel brackets.

Ruotsi's goal is to offer between five to eight different fitness classes a day. She won't touch

the main lobby where the Reformer classes are located and she is continuing to employ the master teachers who are the foundation of Star Pilates. "I don't want to disrupt the existing classes; I don't want to lose the intimacy of the business, either," she says. "I'm not looking to pack the seams."

Ruotsi now offers a Sunday yoga class and is looking for more yoga instructors to offer power yoga. She also wants to add space to have a dedicated spin room and possibly locker and shower rooms.

Ruotsi continues to run Flutter Interiors, her design business. That, coupled with raising her son, makes for a very full and busy life indeed.

Information about classes is available online at [www.starpilatesandfitness.com](http://www.starpilatesandfitness.com).

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### Orinda's In Forma Integral Fitness Celebrates 20 Years

Andrea Colombu started In Forma in 1995, starting with the idea of blending Eastern and Western approaches to fitness. The Italian man, who had been involved in semi-professional sports in his country, moved to California in 1986. In 1988 he went back to college to study anatomy, physiology, kinesiology, exercise science and nutrition. In 1990, he started his personal training career (AFAA & ACE certified), earned a certification in massage therapy from the McKinnon Institute and started his private practice. "We expanded the studio twice, doubling its size to offer all of our classes," says Colombu. "We offer pilates, barre, yoga, strength and cardio classes, nutrition and TRX." Colombu's ambition is to offer tools and practices for both the body and the mind. He went back to school in 2003 for a psychology degree and has made his meditation practice a big part of his life. "I started teaching meditation in the yoga studio in 2014," he says. Some of his clients have been with him for the past 20 years and new ones come in all the time, ranging in age from 13 to 93 years old. He says that he's seen a shift in what people demand over the last 20 years. "The awareness has increased, people want to live healthy lives, and they also want a meaningful lifestyle." In Forma also holds a Parkinson's working group (Colombu's mom had Parkinson's) with a specialized trainer. In Forma is located at 23A Orinda Way, Orinda. For info, call (925) 254-6877 or visit [www.informaorinda.com](http://www.informaorinda.com).

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