

health clubs for a number of years, but its current enormous popularity stems from infomercials that promise you'll "lose weight, kick butt and feel great," or something like that.

JUJITSU (JUI-JITSU)

"Gentle technique"

The roots of *jujitsu* are found in feudal Japan. It was developed by samurais as a way to control the populace by force without killing them. Like other Japanese martial arts, *jujitsu* is yielding. The opponent's energy is utilized and transformed in order to escape, throw, choke, take down, grapple or strangle the opponent. There is also use of joint locking techniques and *atemi*, or striking the nerves and organs. There is also use of small weaponry such as staffs and daggers. Today, *jujitsu* training can include defensive techniques against modern weaponry such as knives, guns, clubs, and rifles.

JUDO

"The philosophy of the gentle way"

Founded in 1882 by professor Jigoro Kano, *judo* is a commonly considered the sport version of *jujitsu*. Kano studied ancient *jujitsu* but found that with the invention of gunpowder the art of the samurais needed updating. It was introduced into the Olympic Games in 1964. Today in *judo* competition, there are less throws and more wrestling-like grappling.

AIKIDO

"The gentle art"

Aikido is a Japanese system concentrated on a nonviolent approach to defense. It was developed from *jujitsu* by Morihei Ueshiba early in the 20th century. Another yielding art, arm and wrist movements are used to deflect offensive moves rather than escalate a fight with more aggression. Because of its defensive nature, this is considered a good martial

art for those of all ages, sizes and genders. This is the art Steven Seagal made famous in the west after he opened the Ten Shin Dojo in West Hollywood.

KARATE-DO

"The way of the empty hand"

Used in the United States as a generic term for all martial arts, there are many styles which fall under the term 'karate'. Most training includes three standard elements: basic techniques, such as blocking and punching, pre-established 'forms' which are imaginary confrontations involving several attackers, and sparring with an opponent. There is *shorien ryu*, and *shotukan* from Japan. There are the Okinawan styles of *goju-ryu* and *uechi-ryu*, and Korean *tang soo do* and *hapkido*, or 'the way of harmonious energy' which employs strikes and kicks as well the off-balancing and throwing techniques found in *aikido*. *Kempo* is an eclectic modern karate invented in the United States. There are also traditional Okinawan and Japanese styles of *kempo*.

MUAY THAI

"Thai Boxing"

Thai boxing, as it's commonly known, originated in medieval times in modern-day Thailand, where it remains the country's national sport. It differs from international boxing because in addition to punching, kicking, knee and elbow strikes are permitted. Fights are preceded by prayers. It has changed little from ancient times except that gloves were introduced about 50 years ago in lieu of horsehide straps and hemp sometimes dipped in resin and glass. Although some women love the rigorous workout Thai boxing gives them, the emphasis on sheer strength and "bone conditioning" exercises turns some off. That being said, there are women's kickboxing classes popping up everywhere that may be more suited to the feminine form.

NINJUTSU

"The art of the ninja"

Often seen as the most mysterious of the martial arts, *ninjutsu* was developed throughout several centuries. It was utilized by military spies in feudal Japan and is considered an alternative to direct combat. Ninjas rely on calculation, stealth and trickery over brute strength to achieve their goals. Ninjas receive training in many different fields including armed and unarmed combat, manufacture of poisons and explosives, wilderness survival methods, geography, meteorology, medicine, concealment tactics, and infiltration skills.

The weapons of the ninja are among the most deadly and tricky to use. The throwing star is outlawed in many U.S. states. *Nunchakus* (nunchucks)—two *bo* (sticks) connected by a chain—are both defensive and offensive. They can be used to entangle a blade or staff and disarm an attacker. Poison darts could be carried in the mouth to kill at close range or shot with a blowgun. *Kunoichi*, or female ninjas, would hide poisonous darts in their hair. They also used the *tessen*, a folding fan with an iron frame that sometimes had a sharp edge used to strike or cut an enemy.

CAPOEIRA

The history of *capoeira* is perhaps the most obscure of all martial arts. It was developed by slaves from Angola, Congo and Mozambique who were brought to Brazil by the Portuguese. The most common theory is the slaves began to develop basic fighting techniques at night in the cramped sleeping quarters called the *senzala*. Independent villages established by escaped slaves between 1624 and 1654, when the Dutch attempted to overtake parts of Brazil, were integral to the development of the art. With the abolishment of slavery in Brazil in 1888, *capoeiristas*, marginalized from society, used their skills for crime. Long time suppression of

capoeira culminated in it being outlawed in 1892. It was ingeniously disguised as a dance during its suppression and survived to evolve into the eclectic, music-oriented art it is today. In 1974 it was recognized as the national art of Brazil.

OTHERS

Kupigana Ngumi is an African martial art that, similar to Brazil's *capoeira*, utilizes dance-like movements. Denverites can take free classes on Wednesday nights at the Moyo Nguvu Cultural Arts Center, which is the only game in town if you want to learn this art.

Model mugging is not a martial art, but it is worth mentioning as it is a defense system designed solely to help women fend off an attacker. It was developed in 1972 following the brutal attack of an accomplished female martial artist who found herself unable, with all her training, to fend off her attacker. In the class, situations are designed to simulate life-like attacks. Women practice full-force defense techniques on heavily padded mock attackers.

Escrima is a form of Filipino stick fighting. *Penak-silat* is an Indonesian type of kung fu that incorporates the use of daggers. Brazilian *jujitsu* is another form of the Japanese martial art of the same name that has been modified by the famous Gracie family. *Kendo* (fencing), *kyudo* (archery) and *sumo* (wrestling) are all sport forms of Japanese martial arts. *Mshindi Vita Saana* (Ki-Swahili for "Champion War Art") was formed in the Philadelphia area in 1973. Based on African music and dance, it was designed to reestablish African martial arts in America and aid political and civil activists if necessary. The southern Indian state of Kerala has its own acrobatic, animal form and weapons-based martial art called *kalarippiyattuu* which has dietary, behavioral and devotional demands similar to some classical yogas. X



Martial artists provided by Warrior Quest, 303-795-3233, www.warriorquest.com

