

Christmas / Holiday Indoor Cycling Mix (45 minutes)



I love to do something special in my classes around the holidays, so for the last week of classes before the holidays, I use a holiday playlist and give out chocolates afterward. There are enough holiday tunes out there to make a full class, but be warned – a little holiday music goes a long way. I usually only use a handful of holiday songs and try to pick

songs that won't be on heavy rotation at the mall. I fill in the rest of the playlist with a mix of (mostly) songs from the year gone by. Here's my holiday class for 2014. It's an interval profile heavy on jumps and climbing, with only one sprint that comes right at the end.

The Nights – Avicii (2:57): Warm up.

Under Control (feat. Hurts) – Calvin Harris & Alesso (3:04): Another minute of warm up, and at 1:00, add some tension and come out of the saddle into a standing climb.

Strong – Arno Cost and Norman Doray (5:54): A combo seated flat/standing climb, one minute of each, 3 sets. This is a long working interval, especially if you move right to it from the previous song.

Oh Come All Ye Faithful – Weezer (2:05): Okay, now this is just totally mean: 8 count double-time quad-killing jumps (like a series of short standing runs), at moderate resistance takes us to 10 minutes of work before the first break comes

into sight.

Waves (Robin Schulz Radio Edit) – Mr. Probz (3:28): Ahhhh... recovery. As much as you like. The whole song, if you need it. When you're ready to work again, find a flat road, close your eyes, and just ride. It's just you and the bike.

Shake It Off – Taylor Swift (3:39): I love the message in this song, "oh the haters gonna hate... shake it off..." I was in my 20s before I truly accepted that not everyone is going to like me, or what I do, and it really has nothing to do with me. That's just how it is. 8 count jumps, moderate resistance.

I Bet My Life – Imagine Dragons (3:13): Move into a seated climb for this sweet ode to parents and parenting difficult children (confession: I was one of those – sorry mom). Lead singer Dan Reynolds croons, "I know I took the path that you would never want for me/I know I let you down, didn't I?/So many sleepless nights/Where you were waiting up on me ... I've told a million lies/But now I tell a single truth/There's you in everything I do." Holidays and family occasions can be ... complicated.

Fireball (feat. John Ryan) – Pitbull (3:55): Now, in contrast, there's nothing complicated about Pitbull or his music. It's all about partying, or women, or for variety, partying *and* women. 8 count jumps. (Crikey, *more* jumps?) Yep.

Love Runs Out – OneRepublic (3:45): Here comes one mother of a hill. Seven minutes to the top. Find a moderate-hard hill and dig in. Stand and attack at each chorus.

Break Free (feat. Zedd) – Ariana Grande (3:35): Adjust the tension to a comfortable challenge level and tackle the rest of the hill standing. Who had a better 2014 than Ariana Grande, except maybe Iggy Azalea?

Run Rudolph Run – Bryan Adams (2:43): Finish with a bike race.

All About That Neis – Maccabeats (2:44): It wouldn't be the holidays without this a cappella group and their tongue-in-cheek Hanukkah parodies of the year's most popular songs. Cool down.

Winter Wonderland – Tony Bennett (2:12): Some additional cool down, stretching and goodbye music. Substitute any favourite holiday song here.

It's getting quiet at the gym. I had only half the usual number of riders in my class today. But we all know we're only a couple of weeks from the complete chaos of every gym in January.

Every year, I set goals for myself in a number of different areas, including teaching indoor cycling and this blog. Last year, my indoor cycling goals were (1) to increase ridership in my classes, (2) learn the names of all of my regulars, and (3) support new riders in making exercise a habit. (My goal for the blog was to create and launch the new and improved Bike Cafe – yay! completed just in time.)

*To reach my indoor cycling teaching goals, I created **Cynthia's Cycling Challenge 2014** and announced it at the outset of class for the first two or three weeks in January. The challenge was simple: complete 12 indoor cycling classes in 12 weeks and win a prize package. I printed business cards at home that had room for each rider's name and the numbers 1-12. When they signed up for the challenge, I put their name on a card and gave them a check mark on the card at the end of each class. (Of course, I hoped they'd take my cycling classes, but I wasn't fussy – if they told me they'd been to another cycling class, I gave a check for that one, too.)*

About two dozen riders signed up and the results were pretty much what you'd expect: some got one check mark and I never saw them again, others got to three or four checks before dropping out. One inexplicably completed the challenge and

never returned to collect her prize. In the end, half of the participants completed the challenge, which I thought was pretty good, and about two-thirds of the participants remain regular or semi-regular riders in my classes. And I know all of their names now!

In early April, after the challenge was complete, I made up a prize package for each successful rider with a Certificate of Completion, a CD of my favourite workout songs, half a dozen healthy recipes, a copy of [Nutrition Action](#) magazine, and some swag from my gym (a t-shirt and head band). If you haven't seen Nutrition Action magazine, you should check it out. It's the publication of the Center for Science in the Public Interest, a non-profit consumer watchdog in the field of food, health science, and nutrition. They're sort of like the Consumer Reports for food. They summarize the latest science plus review and rank foods, which definitely makes it easier to choose healthier foods at the grocery store, even if you're a consummate label reader.

I'm going to run an **Indoor Cycling Challenge** again in 2015, but with a twist: I am going to ask each participant to set his or her own goal for the challenge. I found that one class a week was too easy for those who were already regulars (my most regular rider hit 12 classes about 3 weeks into the challenge), and I want to offer something for them, too. I will also collect email addresses and send out a short weekly note with a couple of health or fitness tips and maybe a preview of my playlist for the next class.

How about you? What are your indoor cycling goals for 2015?