

downtime



R & R

High-net workout

Whether it's volleyball on the beach or blading along the seawall, getting in shape in Vancouver is nothing if not easy and cheap.

Still, if you're inclined to blow a month's rent working out with the stars at Vancouver's only 'holistic' boutique health club, that's an option, too. Studeo55 appears to be flooded with business, namely the deep-pocketed variety, and the owner and former UBC football captain Nathan Mellalieu says members of the 'who's who' fitness club have pumped iron alongside actors Jennifer Garner and Scott Speedman. (*InTouch* recently named the posh club one of the top four celebrity hotspots in Canada.)

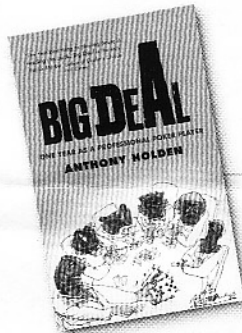
Monthly memberships – which include time with on-site yoga and Pilates instructors, personal trainers and a nutritionist – cost \$600 and up and include a tailor-made program. "Everybody is on a wellness blueprint," says Mellalieu, 28. "You can't just come in and do your own thing." □



SWEET TREATS

Summer sippers

Considering some accuse sugar of being the new crack, it seems to have taken pop bottlers an awfully long time to stir up a diet alternative that isn't laced with the bitter-tasting aspartame. Jones Soda's diet drinks with sucralose – a zero-calorie sweetener derived from sugar – are scoring big with diabetics and dieters alike. The Seattle company once based in Vancouver has sugar-free ginger ale, black cherry cola and cream soda. For an alcoholic twist, try French premium liquor producer Giffard's Ginger of the Indies liqueur (\$39 per bottle) in a martini, on ice cream or drizzled over the rocks. The supply at B.C. liquor stores is sparse, but orders are welcome. It's naturally sweetened with sugar cane and is made by crushing ginger roots, steeping them in alcohol and blending the mixture with steamed orange flower water and coriander essential oil. □



TOME O' THE MOME'

Year off with play

Best-selling British biographer Anthony Holden takes you into the rich, eccentric, nail-biting and often unforgiving world of professional poker in *Big Deal: One Year as a Professional Poker Player*. The game that's unbelievably hot these days has inspired scads of how-to books, but Holden's clever account of his year in the pro poker circuit, penned in 1990, comes up aces.

He expertly describes a cast of barely believable characters he stumbles across after deciding to take a year off to see if he can make it as a poker-playing pro.

From Las Vegas to Malta and on to Morocco, Holden hones his game, loses his shirt, wins it back and along the way gives readers an inside look into the high-stakes world. He emerges insisting poker has little to do with gambling – it is a paradigm of life that reveals human nature at its best and its worst. □

OPTIONS

Grilling competition

Backyard barbecue masters who want to test their searing skills against the best should check out Whistler's Creekside on July 30 and 31, when up to 3,000 contestants and spectators circle the grills for the Canadian BBQ Championships. The world's king of the grill may even make an appearance. Georgia's Myron Mixon – two-time world barbecue champ – is expected to show.

Organizer Joshua Keams says in addition to the "heavyweight" class for pork butt, beef

brisket, chicken and pork ribs there is a "backyard barbecue" class, where most of the Canadians end up. It's a catch-all category for burgers, appetizers, chili and grilled veggies.

Contestants fire up their wood-fired 'smokers' and grill the meat all night. "It's a lifestyle," says Keams, the manager of Dusty's Bar & Grill.

Certified judges from Washington pick the best dish, and this year's meat master wins a free pass to the Jamaican BBQ Championships. Now, that's worth getting stoked about. ■

