

BC Bike Race Final Phase Nutrition - Getting Lean and Mean

By now you are probably a lot more in tune with your eating habits and what your body needs. Hopefully some of those adjustments were easy to make and I'm sure some were hard. But with practice everything gets easier; and, as with physical activity, diet activity is a conscious effort.

With your training on the rise, your intensity on the rise, summer coming, and those winter pounds melting off, you should be starting to look and feel like an athlete ready for his or her A event.

I don't know about you, but when summer comes and it's hot out I tend to eat less hot meals and more cold salads...and comfort foods like soup aren't even available (something I don't agree with). So, this is a natural process our bodies experience, like a bear out of hibernation we naturally fluctuate our fat content - winter is cold, summer is hot. It's important to know this so that you can give the body what it needs while still working with the 'plan' that we have.

Food for thought:

- Hot foods don't require the body to heat them up to body temperature
- Spicy foods may make your stomach upset
- Have you noticed a more sensitive stomach?

All of these concepts and warnings are based on the load or fatigue your body is going through. Professional athletes never stand, but sit; never do extra activity, but rest; and don't add any extra fatigue or strain to their bodies as they are already under enough load and struggling to recover for the next training session.

You may sometimes wonder why pros are so quick to towel-down and put on their track suits even when the temperature is pretty warm. Why are they wearing hats/beanies in the summer? All of this is to minimize the impact of changing temperatures on an already comprised constitution or immune system.

How does this relate to food? We want to keep the digestive process simple and not over-exert the system. It's about maximizing the distribution of nutrients into the body.

Consider now the word BLAND because that is what you should move your diet towards. You are tapering to your event, by physical effort and by diet.

- Cold drinks are hard on the body and stomach
- Spicy food is not good
- Salt: what kind, can it be better?
- Water: what about a low sugar Electrolyte Mix (try Ultima)

Your body is an engine, so think about the quality of fuel going into your gas tank

– and what about oil, transmission fluid, brake fluid, etc? There's a lot to consider.

Training Nutrition

Concept of Sugar, Carbohydrate, and Timing In and Out of the Stomach

During mixed training (long and hard), which is like racing, we need to provide a steady flow of sugar stored as glycogen in our bodies. It really doesn't matter what kind, but at what rate your body can access it. Typically an untrained human body stores enough extra glycogen for 1-1.5 hours of moderately hard exercise. During training we can improve endurance, though it has been debated how much. What is certain is that we do increase our body's ability to absorb what it needs from what we feed it. So, train your body by eating regularly during exercise. Practice what you plan to execute.

Race Day Nutrition

Simple or Complex and Absorption Rates - Glycemic Index

'Ranking carbohydrates according to their effect on our blood glucose levels.'

During a long race of 5-7 hours move from more complex forms of carbohydrate to simpler ones, and once finished reverse the process, all the while considering the energy it takes the body to break down and absorb nutrients, and the location of blood.

During Race

Hours 1-3: Bars. Almost all nutrition bars are a mix of ingredients such that they will deliver a slow steady burn, 300-500 calories per ½ hour depending on body size and effort. Breaking up the bar into smaller pieces will tax the stomach less.

Drink sports drink throughout, 1 bottle per hour minimum

Hours 2.5-5: Semi-solid items like Sharkies, or Cliff Blocs. These are one step closer to being liquid and easier for your body to break down. Now that you are into your event, the blood is in the legs and you don't want to force it back into the stomach.

Drink sports drink at a rough mix of 6-8% sugar concentration which increases absorption of both food and drink calories.

Hours 3.5-7: Gels into the last 2 hours, you are on countdown now. This source is simple sugar and once started there is no turning back - if you run out you will come to a grinding halt.

Drink thinner mix if the day is hot and thicker if it is cool. Remember kids - try this at home before putting into practice!

Last 40 minutes: If possible, a can of POP. That sugar will lift you up and give you wings! Most people like the fizz out, but I don't mind it in. Remember - don't miss time this one or you are in BIG trouble. In most cases with long races this won't be possible, so stay with gels for your last phase and upon crossing the finish line go for that big sugar-up.

Post-Race

First 40 minutes: A can of POP, this will allow your body to take liquid directly out of the stomach and not shunt blood from the damaged legs to the stomach. Do not stuff solids into your mouth as soon as you finish. This is wrong! Though exceptions to that rule exist, generally consider above.

Next 1-1.5hrs: Recovery Shakes or semi-solids. These are easily absorbed and bring blood back to all the right places with the right amount of recovery time. Most mixes are excellent. Some advocate proteins and carbohydrates in synergistic formula. You choose.

Next or as you can fit it in (not missing the Glycogen Window, the best time soon after exercise in which to re-fuel): A complex carbohydrate meal. Keep it fairly simple, (pasta, potatoes, etc) maybe with a little tomato sauce, oil, and some salt, but just the basics to lower the glycemic index and give your body the re-fueling it needs.

Now you are back on track, take a nap, have a massage, wait for dinner and talk with your friends. The stories of the day are fresh in your mind so spin a yarn and get ready to tell some "tales from the Big Ring".

I hope you enjoy this advice. As always, please consult with a physician before engaging in any radical diet or exercise changes.

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