

Eating Before a Bike Race

When You Eat Is Just as Important as What You Eat



What you eat, when you eat and how much you eat before are all very important parts of bike racing. If you eat too little you will not have the energy you need to race well.

If you are going to be in a bike race and you want to race well then you need to do a few things to prepare ahead of time. Of course, you need to train and train hard. You need to make sure to warm up. Bring everything with you that you could possibly need to your races; you never know what could happen. Just as important is what, how much and when you eat the day of the bike race.

I do not mean what kind of food you eat every day while you are training for the bike race, although that is important too. What I'm talking about is what you eat and drink the day of the bike race.

Of course, you know you have to eat before you go on a long bike race. If you do not eat enough you will "bonk". That's the technical term for running out of energy and feeling generally not well. It happens when you have not had enough to eat or drink.

Here are a few basic rules of thumb:

1. **Do not eat within 2 hours of a bike race.** The food needs time to digest and get out of your stomach before your bike race. If you eat too soon to your bike race, you will start to feel sick when you start to exert yourself. Some bike racers end up throwing up their breakfast during races because they do not follow this rule. Don't become one of them.
2. **Eat a high carbohydrate meal before your race.** Oatmeal, whole grain breads, whole grain bagels, Ezekiel muffins, whole grain pancakes, whole grain waffles and whole-wheat pasta. These are all good foods to eat before a bike race. They will give you the kind of energy you need to keep going for hours. **Avoid** white bread and sugar cereals before the race because they will give you short term energy but will not be there when you really need it.
3. **No protein or dairy.** Meat and eggs will sit in your stomach too long. You do not want things sitting in your stomach when you're trying to race in a bike race.

Dairy products like milk, cheese and yogurt may make you feel sick. Try to avoid these foods before your bike race.

4. **Hydrate.** You also must remember to drink enough. **Staying hydrated** is really important to bike racing. Drinking an endurance drink is good for you during a bike race too, I normally do not advocate these however, Gatorade Endurance is one you can try. Drinking too much during a bike race is not good either so you need to find the right balance for you.
5. **Eat and Drink.** If it is going to be a particularly long bike race, you may want to bring a small snack to eat along the way. Do not eat too much at once during the bike race or you will get sick but you may need a recharge. A general rule of thumb for bike **rides** is to **drink every 15 minutes and eat every 15 miles**. I am not sure how that goes with bike racing but it might be something to think about.
6. **After the race.** Get more carbohydrates into you right away after the bike race, within 30 minutes. Also, replenish your vitamins. Get a recovery drink right after your bike race that is what they're for. **Eat your proteins now.**

Adapted from Linda Roeder, March 19, 2007

Tour de France

Day of rest means eating right, a lot for Armstrong

By Sal Ruibal, USA TODAY

MULHOUSE, France — Monday is a rest day for the Tour de France, but the riders won't be sleeping late and calling room service for burgers and beers. Rest at the world's biggest bike race means an "easy" 60-mile ride to stay loose, a slew of news conferences and sponsor soirees and lots of healthy eating and drinking.



Lance Armstrong drinks during the ninth stage of the Tour de France. On Monday, he will rest and eat healthy.

By Franck Fife, AFP/Getty Images

This year's rest day is especially important because it comes one day before this race's first critical mountaintop finish, a 13.8-mile, 6.2% grade climb to the peak of the famed Courchevel ski resort.

Tours are won and lost on summit finishes so it is vital the top contenders get their fuel tanks topped off before the Alps.

"Mountain stages are long and arduous, sometimes demanding more than six hours on the bike. At the speed Lance Armstrong and the pack ride up the mountain passes, they are burning 4-5 grams of carbohydrate, and 15-20 total calories, each minute," says Chris Carmichael, who has coached the six-time champ on the bike at the dinner table for most of his career.

That's about 1,200 calories for the last climb alone and a total of more than 5,000 during the five hours of riding Tuesday.

With just two Category 1 climbs (the next to highest), Courchevel pales in comparison with Wednesday's stage to Briancon, which boasts one Category 1 ascent and two beyond-classification climbs.

Armstrong's first critical feed zone will be Tuesday's breakfast.

"Breakfast is the most important meal of the day, especially for athletes and active people," Carmichael says. "A lot of your body's stored carbohydrate is burned up as you sleep, and that's energy your brain needs in order to have a productive morning."

Armstrong's feast will include two bowls of whole grain cereal topped with skim milk and fresh fruit, a three- or four-egg omelet and some pasta, rice or potatoes.

"And don't forget the two cups of Peet's Coffee," Carmichael says.

The preparation for the next day of racing begins immediately after the rider crosses the finish line.

"Recovery is absolutely essential for surviving the Tour de France," Carmichael says. "After you spend all day racing at full-throttle, you have to replenish energy, vitamins and minerals you depleted."

Minutes after a race, Armstrong gets a specially formulated recovery drink, then moves on to a smoothie with carbohydrates, anti-oxidants and calcium.

Within about 90 minutes of the end of the stage, Armstrong sits down with the team for dinner, which includes plenty of meat, fish, pasta, fresh vegetables and fruit.

Eat like Armstrong

This recipe, provided by Lance Armstrong's personal coach Chris Carmichael, gets its name from a play on words with the French phrase for the Tour de France leader's yellow jersey, maillot jaune. See [more recipes](#) below.

Mellow Jean's Yellow Pepper Soup

Ingredients:

3 large yellow peppers; cored, seeded, cut into 6 pieces each

1 small yellow onion, peeled. Cut in half and then cut each half into 8 pieces

1 medium carrot. Peel, remove tips and tails and cut into ¼" rounds

2 T olive oil

1 cup vegetable broth (can substitute water)

4 cups water

½ tsp yellow curry, optional

2 T honey

¾ cup non-fat sour cream

Salt and pepper to taste

Place all ingredients except the sour cream, honey, salt and pepper, in a 5-quart saucepan over high heat. Bring to a boil, and turn down to a low boil for 35 minutes. Remove from heat and puree in a food processor until smooth. This will take several batches. Strain with a medium-fine mesh strainer back in the saucepan. This step is optional; the result will be chunkier and slightly more tart if not strained. Discard pulp. Place sour cream in a bowl with the honey and whisk in ½ cup of the soup mixture to blend. Place soup over medium high heat and stir in sour cream and honey mixture. Season with salt and pepper to taste.

Nutritional information:

(makes four servings)

Calories: 245

Carbohydrates: 35 grams

Protein: 6 grams

Fat: 9 grams

More recipes

Carmichael estimates cyclists burn 15-20 calories each minute during the mountain stages. But you don't have to be an elite cyclist to eat like Lance. Instead, here's a chicken stir fry and smoothie taken from *Chris Carmichael's Fitness Cookbook* that anyone can enjoy.

Chicken and Snow Pea Stir Fry

Two cups of this stir-fry gives an athlete the carbohydrate and protein necessary for recovery from training or racing, and the nutrients replenish energy stores for tomorrow. If you're short on time, you can substitute white rice.

Servings: Four

Time: 1 hour (20 minutes if brown rice is already prepared)

Rice

1 cup brown rice

2 T Canola oil

1-1/2 cup water

Stir Fry ingredients

1 pound boneless, skinless chicken breast, sliced into thin strips

3 ounces snow peas, sliced into thin strips

1 medium red pepper, cut into thin slices

1 medium yellow pepper, cut into thin slices

1 leek, cut into thin ringlets, rinsed then dried

1/2 small onion, sliced into thin strips

1 clove fresh garlic, finely minced

3 T Canola oil

2 tsp minced fresh ginger

1 T fresh lemon juice

3 T low sodium soy sauce

4 T arrowroot

Salt and pepper to taste

Directions: Prepare brown rice according to instructions on the box or bag. In a flat baking sheet add the Arrowroot, and roll the chicken around until covered. Heat a large non-stick pan over medium-high heat.

Add 3 T of the Canola oil.

Add the chicken and stir continuously for 5-7 min minutes. Set aside until the vegetable mix is finished.

Heat a separate large non-stick pan or Wok over medium-high heat.

Add 1 T of the Canola oil.

Add the onion and stir for three minutes.

Add the leek and pepper, and stir for three minutes.

Add the garlic and the snow peas and cook for seven minutes.

Stir in the rest of the ingredients, then stir in cooked chicken

Season to taste, serve over brown rice.

Nutritional information:

Calories — 533

Carbohydrates — 53 grams

Protein — 33 grams

Fat — 21 grams

Oat Bran Super Drink with Almond Butter, Yogurt, and Blueberries

A lot of the body's stored carbohydrate is burned while sleeping, and that's energy the brain needs to have a productive morning. This quick and easy breakfast also offers benefits from the blueberries' antioxidants, the oat bran's fiber and the calcium from low-fat milk and yogurt.

Servings: Four 14-ounce glasses

Time: 20 minutes

Ingredients

2 ½ cups 1% milk

2 ½ cups non fat plain yogurt

1 cup ripe blueberries (or ¾ cup frozen)

4 T oat bran

3 T almond butter

5 T apricot Fruit Only spread/jam

3 T honey

1/4 tsp salt

Directions: Place all ingredients in a blender, puree until smooth.

Nutritional information:

Calories: 363

Carbohydrates: 59 grams

Protein: 16 grams

Fat: 7 grams

Instructions before the Bike Race:

1. **Step 1**
Stick with a high-carbohydrate diet. This includes whole grain breads, whole wheat pasta, whole grain cereals, fruits and vegetables.
2. **Step 2**
Watch fat consumption. Excessively fatty foods fill the stomach and the fat cells, but leave the muscles less fueled.
3. **Step 3**
Don't stuff yourself. You will be training less and eating the same. This way, the calories you would normally expend during training can be used to fuel your muscles.
4. **Step 4**
Eat a familiar breakfast two to three hours before the start of the race.
5. **Step 5**
Drink plenty of fluids on the race morning. Drink several glasses up to two hours before the race, then tank up again 5 to 15 minutes before the starting gun.
6. **Step 6**
Have a cup of coffee if that is your habit, but watch caffeine consumption. Keep in mind that caffeine contributes to water loss.

Instructions during the Bike Race:

1. **Step 1**
Be sure to drink water and/or sports drinks every 15 to 20 minutes. Do not let yourself get thirsty. Your goal is to prevent dehydration.

2. **Step 2**
Catch the early water stops. Once you are dehydrated, you will not catch up.
3. **Step 3**
Consider the research. You might be able to increase your stamina by as much as 18 percent if you take in 0.5 grams of carbohydrates per pound of body weight during the race.
4. **Step 4**
Feel better by replacing not only water but also carbohydrates while racing. These carbohydrates help to maintain a normal blood sugar level, as well as provide a source of energy for your muscles.
5. **Step 5**
Try sports drinks, but also eat a banana or a sports bar. I personally like Lara Bars, they are raw and organic and delicious too.
6. **Step 6**
Don't overdo it. While some fluids and carbohydrates are good, too much can cause stomach problems.
7. **Step 7**
Beware of trying something new. Some race spectators hand out food, but it's risky to try something you haven't tested first in training.

Tips & Warnings

- Expect a little weight gain the week before the race. Three or four pounds should not cause panic. This weight gain reflects water weight, and is a sign your muscles are well-saturated with carbohydrates.
- Abstain from wine, beer and alcoholic beverages the night before the race, because they have a dehydrating effect.
- Eat a little too much rather than too little the evening before the race. It is better to err with too much. You will learn the right balance with practice.
- If you have any condition that would impair or limit your ability to engage in physical activity, please consult a physician before attempting this activity. This information is not intended as a substitute for professional medical advice or treatment.

Instructions for after the Bike Race:

1. **Step 1**
Continue to eat plenty of post-marathon recovery carbohydrates to refuel your muscles. This includes whole grains - bread, brown rice and whole-wheat pasta - and fruits and vegetables.
2. **Step 2**
Take in adequate protein - meat, dairy and fish - to help in healing damaged muscles. (If you prefer not to eat animal products, get plenty of protein from beans, legumes and soy.)
3. **Step 3**
Consume potassium-rich fruits and juices, such as bananas and orange juice, and salty foods to replace electrolyte losses.
4. **Step 4**
Get something to eat right after biking. Consuming at least a small amount of

carbohydrates within the first 20 minutes after biking has been shown to optimize replacement of muscle fuel.

5. **Step 5**

Continue taking in fluids. The need to urinate frequently is a sign you are well hydrated.

6. **Step 6**

Replenish with extra fluids if you soak in a bath after the race.

Tips & Warnings

- Allow yourself to rest, heal and eat well.
- Relax and reward yourself. You need not be as meticulous about your diet as you were during training.
- Allowing proper recovery time before resuming biking is also essential.
- If you have any condition that would impair or limit your ability to engage in physical activity, please consult a physician before attempting this activity. This information is not intended as a substitute for professional medical advice or treatment.

HAPPY RACING TO ALL...



Adapted from Suite 101, EHow and USA Today

Compliments of: Alice Marino