

Favorite Foods

The nutritional needs of athletes in general, and bicycle racers in particular, are close to the general population. But there are some important differences.

Athletes have many favorite ways for getting the calories they need. Here are a few of my favorite specific recommendations:



Personal Favorites

Athletes must have sufficient carbohydrate energy stores to exercise. For exercise more than one hour, or repeated bouts of exercise, specific attention must be given to achieving those stores.

Athletes who exercise longer than one hour can benefit from carbohydrate intake during exercise.

Athletes who exercise for hours in the heat may need extra sodium.

During intense exercise, or when anxious, it's hard to eat solid food. Liquids go down easier. When exercise is intense, especially in the heat, the concentration of carbohydrate solution that can be tolerated goes down.

Fat slows digestion and is harder to digest. This is important to bear in mind just before, during, and just after competition.

For some athletes, caffeine can help performance.

A waterbottle has 18 to 23 ounces. The serving sizes for the liquids below are much less. Roughly double the nutrient content of the beverages below when comparing to the nutrients in a standard waterbottle.

Where calories from carbs or protein are not given on the nutritional information label, I estimate based on 4 calories per gram of carb or protein and 9 calories per gram of fat.

Starbucks Frappuccino

Sold in grocery stores, convenience stores, as well as the ubiquitous Starbucks coffee houses. Easy to get down before a race.

Made from reduced fat milk, maltodextrins, and coffee.

Contains 95 mg of caffeine per 9.5 fluid ounce serving.

Kosher too.

	Serving size	9.5 oz		
	Retail cost	\$1.29		
	Calories	200		
		<i>Calories</i>	<i>Grams</i>	<i>% Total</i>
	Carbs	140	35	70
	Simple	124	31	62
	Protein	30	7	15
	Fat	30	3.5	15
	Sodium	110 mg		
	Caffeine	93 mg		

Pop-Tarts

Regular pop-tarts information is provided. There is also a low-fat version.

Perfect for bicycle-jersey pockets. Universally available. Easy to digest. Relatively inexpensive.

	Serving size	1 tart		
	Retail cost	\$0.13		
	Calories	200		
		<i>Calories</i>	<i>Grams</i>	<i>% Total</i>
	Carbs	130	37	65
	Simple	60	15	30
	Protein	20	2	10
	Fat	50	5	25
	Sodium	190 mg		

Continued


Maltodextrin QD 500

You want to get in 300 calories an hour while riding/racing. But the weather is too hot or the effort too intense for solid food. And regular sports drinks like Gatorade or Cytomax only give about 100 calories per bottle.

Here's a way to get three times as many calories. Even at 300 calories per bottle maltodextrins cause less gastrointestinal distress than the standard 6% sugar solutions. The caloric benefit is high.

If you are drinking two bottles per hour, you need just 150 calories per bottle.


Purchased in bulk from the distributor, less than 5% of the cost of commercial sports drinks.

	Serving size	8 oz		
	Retail cost	\$0.04		
	Calories	150		
		<i>Calories</i>	<i>Grams</i>	<i>% Total</i>
	Carbs	150	37	100
	Simple	0	0	0
	Protein	0	0	0
	Fat	0	0	0
	Sodium	65 mg		

Ensure-Light

You have a race in an hour or two, and you know you need to get in some calories. But you are nervous, and don't feel like eating. Or you've had a tough race, and your stomach is upset. You know you should get some calories in pronto.

The Ensure name is associated with the Medicare set and with physical problems. The truth is: You've got a problem too—because you're gastrointestinal tract isn't working right. Here's a convenient, commonly available, easily-digestible way to get calories in.

	Serving size	8 oz		
	Retail cost	\$1.29		
	Calories	200		
		<i>Calories</i>	<i>Grams</i>	<i>% Total</i>
	Carbs	133	33	67
	Simple*	18	18	9
	Protein	40	10	20
	Fat	27	3	13
	Sodium	200 mg		

*Chocolate flavor has more simple sugars.

Summary

These foods are not necessarily gourmet choices. However, each of these four favorite foods offers some advantageous combination of nutritional density, digestibility, palatability, or availability.

More Cycling Nutrition Information

For more information see these publications at <http://arniebakercycling.com/>

- *Bicycle Medicine* book
- *Endurance Sport Nutrition* handout
- *Maltodextrin* handout and slideshow
- *Nutrition Quiz* handout
- *Vitamin & Minerals* handout

Disclosure

Dr. Baker does not receive nor has received personal sponsorship or products from any of the companies mentioned in this article.

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