

## A Guide to Best Food Choices during Race Trips

From the Race Trip Organizer's Handbook:

### **Meals**

The key to feeding athletes is to provide large quantities of nutritious food in a timely fashion. For this reason sit down restaurant meals are generally not an effective option unless there is a large capacity buffet available.

### **Guidelines**

- i. Meal planning should be done in advance of the trip. Generally food items for breakfast and lunch (sandwiches) are purchased and then put together by the volunteers/athletes at the place of accommodation and eaten there or at the race site.
- ii. Breakfast buffets at the place of accommodation are common and depending on what is on offer, you might decide to supplement.
- iii. Lunches are prepared the night before and placed in fridges for each person to take to the race site. Sandwiches work best.
- iv. When selecting breakfast and lunch foods, choose the most natural and nutritious and least processed foods available. Limit products with added sugar, choosing instead foods that have naturally occurring sugar, such as dried fruit. Avoid sugar substitutes. Sugar is important for active racing kids and is good for after races and in pre-race snacks. Choose whole wheat bread as opposed to white. Ensure that there are healthy carbohydrates and protein at each meal. Many people eat too much protein for supper, and too little in the morning. Almost everyone can benefit from including some protein at most meals and snacks to help control blood glucose levels and feel full longer. Choose low fat or up to 2% fat for dairy products. While keeping an eye on the budget is important, athletes need good fuel for optimum performance.
- v. For supper, priority should be placed on home cooked meals rather than eating in restaurants, in order to minimize food costs and maximize nutrition. Banquet hall style catering, buffets, and University/college cafeterias are often available and also a good option.
- vi. Skiers are generally available and ready to eat meals earlier than traditional supper times, so this can help with the timing of meals to avoid crowded dining areas.
- vii. Special Dietary considerations, such as food allergies and sensitivities should be accommodated. Well in advance of the trip, the TO should request this information from the parents, asking for specific brand names so that finding products for breakfast and lunch is easier.
- viii. When transporting and reheating home cooked meals is an option, parents not attending the trip should be solicited in advance to

provide nutritious prepared meals, muffins, and snacks, and will be fully reimbursed for their grocery expenses out of the trip budget.

Plan well with frozen foods – large lasagnas can take a long time to defrost (days). Ask parents sending meals to send them in Ziploc bags, or in labelled containers to avoid losing dishes.

ix. Asking for specific types and quantities of meals from parents allows for more efficient food organization and supper preparation.

One system that works well is to have each parent prepare a main dish, vegetable/salad and dessert for 6-8 people. Depending on how many people that need to be fed, you may need multiple parents preparing suppers for each night of the trip. All meals should be clearly labelled with all ingredients listed, name of cook and the day for which the meal has been prepared. While portion sizes and appetites vary, try to encourage parents to make a reasonable amount so that you are not stuck with too many leftovers (though these tend to make great afternoon snacks). Another option is to have one parent make dinner for an entire group (for example, if the group is divided into chalets), and have another parent make snacks. Salads and bread can take up a lot of room in a vehicle en route to a ski race, so you might want to buy salad ingredients and bread at the destination, if this is an option.

When planning meals, take into consideration any food allergies or sensitivities (some athletes are extremely sensitive and will become ill, for example, if the spoon that was used to stir the wheat pasta is then used to stir the gluten-free meal), how much room you have for refrigeration, and what appliances/pots/dishes are available for reheating.

x. Examples of popular suppers: lasagna, pasta with tomato-meat sauce, meatballs, chicken and vegetable one-pot meals, chili with or without meat, mild curries, beef and veggie bean/lentil stews, etc. Ensure there are alternative protein sources for athletes on vegetarian diets. Skiers love their vegetables/salads, so make sure parents provide enough! For dessert, easy to slice and serve banana, carrot, zucchini breads are great. Cookies and squares are also popular.

xi. Duty rosters and schedules for meal preparation and clean up, should be prepared in advance of the trip and posted at the accommodation.

xii. The TO should be prepared to purchase additional groceries as necessary during the trip. If a store is nearby, buying as you need can be a better option than buying in bulk from Costco and having enormous quantities of bread and cereal leftover.

xiii. All receipts for groceries should be provided to the TO as expenses are incurred and, at the latest, within one week of the trip's end.

## **Recommended Breakfast Foods**

**rolled oats**--avoid instant flavoured oatmeal (highly refined, and usually quite high in sugar)

**cereal**

**granola**

**bagels/bread**—whole wheat

**cream cheese** (full fat)

**butter**

**peanut butter**

**jam**

**eggs**

**fruit** bananas, apples, clementines, oranges, frozen berries

**yogurt** —plain, low fat and 2%; plain yogurt is healthier but few will eat it, so flavoured is fine; Greek yogurt is a great source of protein

**milk** --low fat or 1%

**juice**—fruit is MUCH better than juice (which has as much sugar as soda, few nutrients, and no fiber), but most kids are used to juice, and considering the high levels of activity on a race trip, sugar not as big of an issue

## **Recommended Lunch Foods (sandwiches and snacks)**

bread/bagels—whole wheat

cheese (full fat and not processed slices—large blocks are less expensive and easy to cut)

sliced cold cuts—gluten free available

mustard

mayo

Salad greens

cucumbers

hummus

peanut butter and jam

veggies (snap peas, "baby" carrots, cucumber rounds, cherry tomatoes)

unsalted almonds

dried mango slices (tend to find only sweetened kind)

granola bars

small yogurts

juice boxes

### What Should I Eat Before I Workout/Race?

Eating before exercising can be tricky: figuring out how to fuel for workouts in the early morning, lunch breaks, or supper-time takes some planning and practice. But it's definitely worth finding a plan that works for you, since the food you eat before your workout has many benefits besides curbing hunger: it can help fuel your muscles and brain, top off your glycogen stores, increase motivation, decrease perceived exertion, boost your endurance and performance, and set the stage for faster post-workout recovery. On the other hand, what you eat (or don't eat!) can also lead to lightheadedness, fatigue, cramping, or gastric distress. [Go to Article >>](#)

### Refueling After Exercise/Racing

Most athletes realize that proper recovery is critical to athletic success: rest allows your body's systems to adapt to the stresses of training and hopefully make you stronger and faster. Many athletes are not as aware, however, that you can maximize your training gains, speed up the recovery process, and enhance subsequent performance by consuming the right foods or fluids at the right times following a workout. [Go to Article >>](#)

### Protein

Although most people are eating enough protein, many could choose better protein sources and optimize how they distribute their protein intake throughout the day. For example, many people eat too much protein for supper, and too little in the morning. Almost everyone can benefit from including some protein at most meals and snacks to help control blood glucose levels and feel full longer. Athletes are another group who can benefit from better protein distribution, as you'll see below. [Go to Article](#)

### Iron

Understandably, athletes are often concerned about iron, because iron is part of hemoglobin in blood and myoglobin in muscles, helping deliver oxygen to cells. Low hemoglobin can result in fatigue and decreased aerobic capacity, leading some athletes to assume that extra iron will enhance performance. Indeed, some endurance athletes take iron supplements regardless of their iron status, even though excess iron might compromise their health. On the other hand, truly iron deficient athletes might not be aware of their status, and changes in their diet or iron

supplements might reduce fatigue or improve performance. But dietary changes aren't straightforward because iron absorption is a complicated phenomenon. [Go to Article](#)

*Special thanks to Sheila Kealey for her nutritional expertise and for allowing the reprinting of material from her excellent website. For more nutritional advice go to:*

<http://www.sheilakealey.com/>