

SPORTS NUTRITION 101

Fuel consistently. Hydrate intentionally. Recover on purpose.

Performance nutrition is not a perfect menu. It is a repeatable pattern that matches food and fluids to your training, recovery, schedule, culture, and preferences.

Four foundations

1 Fuel enough - consistently • Avoid letting hard training run on skipped meals. • Plan portable food for class, work, travel, and practice.	2 Build complete meals • Anchor meals with carbohydrate, protein, and produce. • Add fats and fluids that fit the day and your needs.
3 Match food to timing • Emphasize carbohydrate around training. • Closer to activity, choose foods that digest comfortably.	4 Recover on purpose • After strenuous or long sessions, replace carbohydrate and fluid. • Include protein to support repair and adaptation.

Your training-day game plan

BEFORE • 2-4 hours: a meal with carbohydrate + protein; reduce fat/fiber if your stomach is sensitive. • 30-60 minutes: add a quick carbohydrate top-up if needed.	DURING • Water works for many shorter or easier sessions. • For prolonged, intense, hot, or very sweaty sessions, an individualized carbohydrate/electrolyte plan may help.	AFTER • If a meal is soon, build a balanced plate. • If not, start with a carbohydrate + protein snack and fluids, then follow with a meal.
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Hydration snapshot: Pale-yellow urine can be one rough cue, but thirst, weather, sweat rate, session duration, and individual tolerance also matter. Sports drinks and energy drinks are not the same product.



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FUELING MULTIPLE TRAINING SESSIONS

Treat the time between workouts as part of the training plan.

On double-session days, pack the night before and start recovery after session one. The shorter the turnaround, the more important convenient carbohydrate, protein, fluids, and sodium become.

A practical sequence

1 THE NIGHT BEFORE • Check the schedule and identify eating windows. • Pack a bottle, meals, snacks, and shelf-stable backups.	2 2-4 HOURS BEFORE • Eat a familiar meal built around carbohydrate + protein. • Examples: oats + milk + banana; sandwich + fruit; rice bowl + chicken/tofu.
3 30-60 MINUTES BEFORE • Top up with easy carbohydrate if needed. • Examples: banana, applesauce, pretzels, cereal bar, or an appropriate sports drink.	4 DURING SESSION ONE • Sip fluids; add carbohydrate/electrolytes when the session and environment call for them. • Practice the plan in training - not for the first time on competition day.
5 BETWEEN SESSIONS • Choose carbohydrate + protein + fluids soon after session one. • Ideas: yogurt + granola; chocolate milk + banana; sandwich + fruit; smoothie + pretzels.	6 AFTER THE FINAL SESSION • Eat a complete meal and continue replacing fluid/sodium losses. • Sleep and total daily intake remain part of recovery.

Follow up: Persistent fatigue, dizziness, headaches, recurrent injuries, GI distress, menstrual changes, or significant weight change deserve individualized assessment by a sports dietitian and medical team.

Educational references: [NCAA Eating Frequency for the Student-Athlete \(Feb. 2025\)](#); [NCAA Nutrition, Hydration & Sleep](#); [ACSM Sports Nutrition Facts \(Dec. 2024\)](#). General education only; individual needs vary.



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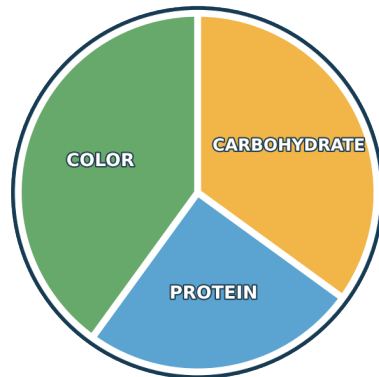


THE PERFORMANCE PLATE

A flexible visual for matching meals to the day's training demand.

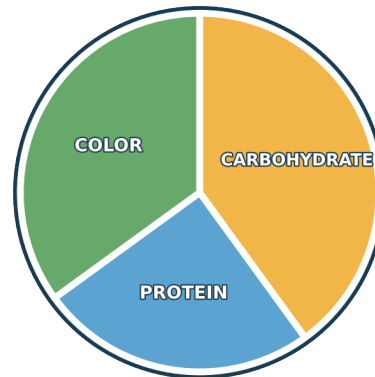
No single plate fits every day. As training becomes longer, harder, or more frequent, carbohydrate usually takes up more space. Protein stays steady; produce, fats, and fluids complete the meal.

EASY / RECOVERY DAY



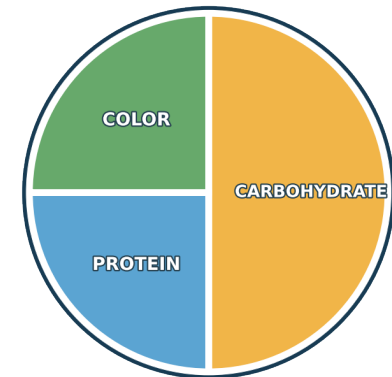
more color + steady fuel

MODERATE TRAINING



balanced starting point

HARD / MULTIPLE SESSIONS



more carbohydrate

Visual starting points - portions should be individualized for body size, sport, goals, appetite, access, and medical needs.

What goes on the plate

CARBOHYDRATE | primary training fuel

- Rice, pasta, bread, oats, cereal, potatoes, fruit, beans, tortillas, couscous.
- Increase the portion and/or add sides on higher-demand days.

PROTEIN | repair + adaptation

- Eggs, dairy/soy, poultry, fish, lean meat, tofu, tempeh, beans, lentils.
- Distribute protein across meals and snacks.

COLOR | micronutrients + variety

- Use fruits and vegetables you enjoy - fresh, frozen, canned, or dried all count.
- Aim for variety over the week, not perfection at each meal.

FATS + FLUIDS | energy + hydration

- Include oils, avocado, nuts, seeds, nut/seed butters, or fatty fish.
- Drink regularly; add sodium/electrolytes when sweat losses and session demands warrant it.



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BREAKFAST: START FUELED

Simple combinations for early training, class, work, and busy mornings.

Breakfast restores energy after the overnight fast and makes it easier to meet the demands of training and the rest of your day. Build from what sounds good and what your stomach tolerates.

The breakfast formula

CARBOHYDRATE	PROTEIN	COLOR	FLUID
oats, cereal, bread, tortilla, fruit	eggs, yogurt, milk/soy, cottage cheese	fruit or vegetables	water, milk/soy, smoothie

Mix-and-match ideas

IN A BOWL •Oatmeal + milk/soy milk + banana + nut butter. •Cereal + Greek yogurt + berries. •Cottage cheese + fruit + granola. •Microwave eggs + toast + fruit.	ON A PLATE •Eggs + whole-grain toast + fruit. •Waffles + yogurt + berries. •Breakfast burrito with eggs, beans, cheese, and salsa. •Nut-butter toast + banana + milk/soy milk.
GRAB + GO •Peanut butter and jelly + milk/soy milk. •Smoothie + toast or a cereal bar. •Hard-boiled eggs + cereal + fruit. •Yogurt drink + granola bar + banana.	ORDER OUT •Egg-and-cheese sandwich + fruit. •Oatmeal + nuts + fruit + milk. •Yogurt parfait + granola. •Bagel with egg/cheese or nut butter + fruit.

Training soon: If a full meal feels uncomfortable, choose a smaller, familiar carbohydrate-rich option and limit fat/fiber as needed. Follow training with breakfast or a recovery snack.



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LUNCH: MIDDAY FUEL THAT WORKS

Keep energy steady for afternoon practice, class, work, and recovery.

Lunch is often squeezed between commitments. A planned meal can prevent the afternoon crash and gives you another chance to support training, focus, and recovery.

The lunch formula

CARBOHYDRATE	PROTEIN	COLOR	FLUID
bread, wrap, rice, pasta, potato, fruit	turkey, tuna, eggs, beans, tofu, dairy	fruit and/or vegetables	water, milk/soy, other planned beverage

Mix-and-match ideas

SANDWICHES + SUBS • Turkey + cheese + veggies, with fruit and pretzels. • Tuna melt + tomato, with soup or salad. • Egg salad + greens, with crackers and fruit. • Hummus + roasted vegetables + feta in pita.	WRAPS + BOWLS • Chicken/tofu burrito bowl with rice, beans, salsa, and veggies. • Chicken + veggie pita with yogurt sauce. • Mediterranean grain bowl with chickpeas and pita. • Leftover stir-fry over rice or noodles.
DINING HALL / CAFE • Baked potato + chili + vegetables + roll. • Grilled protein + rice/potatoes + vegetables + fruit. • Soup + half sandwich + fruit or salad. • Pasta bowl with protein and vegetables.	PACKABLE • Cold pasta salad with chicken/beans and vegetables. • DIY snack plate: crackers, cheese/edamame, fruit, veggies. • Peanut butter and jelly + yogurt + fruit. • Thermos rice bowl or soup with bread.

Practice after lunch: Eat earlier when possible. If your stomach is sensitive, use familiar foods and adjust fat, fiber, spice, and portion size - then pack a simple carbohydrate top-up for later.



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PERFORMANCE SNACKS

Portable mini-meals for energy between meals and around training.

A useful everyday snack pairs carbohydrate for energy with protein for staying power and recovery. Add fruit or vegetables and fluids when they fit your needs.

Build it

CARBOHYDRATE	PROTEIN	OPTIONAL COLOR	FLUID
fruit, cereal, pretzels, bread, crackers	yogurt, milk/soy, nuts, eggs, hummus	fruit or vegetables	water or planned training beverage

Mix-and-match ideas

SHELF-STABLE •Trail mix with cereal, dried fruit, nuts/seeds. •Peanut butter crackers + fruit cup. •Tuna pouch + crackers + applesauce. •Granola/protein bar + banana.	NEEDS REFRIGERATION •Greek yogurt + granola + fruit. •String cheese + pretzels + apple. •Hummus + pita + vegetables. •Chocolate milk or soy milk + banana.
VENDING / CONVENIENCE •Fruit-and-nut mix + crackers. •Peanut butter crackers + 100% juice. •Pretzels + peanuts + fruit cup. •Cereal bar + shelf-stable milk/soy milk.	QUICK RECOVERY •Smoothie with fruit + Greek yogurt/protein. •Chocolate milk + cereal bar. •Yogurt parfait + granola. •Nut-butter sandwich + milk/soy milk.

Timing: Closer to training, keep the snack smaller and easier to digest. After strenuous training, prioritize carbohydrate + protein + fluids, especially when the next meal or session is not soon.



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DINNER: REFUEL + RECOVER

Practical meals that support tomorrow's training without requiring perfection.

Dinner helps replace fuel used during the day and supports recovery overnight. Build a complete plate, adjust portions to the training load, and make enough for tomorrow's lunch when you can.

The recovery formula

CARBOHYDRATE	PROTEIN	COLOR	FAT + FLUID
rice, pasta, bread, potatoes, grains	fish, poultry, meat, eggs, tofu, beans	fresh, frozen, or canned produce	oil, avocado, nuts/seeds + beverage

Mix-and-match ideas

FROM THE STOVE • Pasta with meat/bean sauce + side salad. • Tacos with beans/meat/tofu, rice, salsa, and vegetables. • Stir-fry with protein, vegetables, and rice/noodles. • Breakfast for dinner: omelet, toast/potatoes, and fruit.	MICROWAVE / NO-COOK • Loaded potato with broccoli, cheese, and beans. • Microwave grain + frozen vegetables + chicken/tofu. • Bagged salad + leftover protein + roll + fruit. • Soup/chili + pita or bread + vegetables.
OVEN / AIR FRYER • Chicken/tofu + sweet potato + broccoli. • Fish + couscous/rice + asparagus. • Sheet-pan sausage/beans + potatoes + vegetables. • Lasagna or baked pasta + spinach/salad.	TAKEOUT / ON THE GO • Burrito bowl with rice, beans/protein, vegetables, and toppings. • Chicken/beef/shrimp/tofu + broccoli + rice. • Pizza + vegetable topping or side salad + fruit. • Sandwich/wrap + soup or salad + fruit.

Late practice: If appetite is low, start recovery with a smoothie, chocolate milk, yogurt drink, or another easy option, then eat a more complete meal when comfortable.



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