

## **Cycling Nutrition – Coach Alan Bazard (USA Cycling)**

### **Pre Ride Nutrition**

Riders need to **start out** a ride with a full tank of stored energy or glycogen. This comes from Carbohydrates consumed well before the start of the ride. For a Saturday Ride, the ideal best time to eat a high carbohydrate meal is Thursday Dinner or Friday Lunch. You may often hear of athletes Carbo Loading at Dinner the night before a big ride. This is OK, but it takes 14-15 hours for the stomach to fully digest food and convert the Carbs to Glycogen (stored sugars). Once stored, glycogen is consumed by the cardiovascular and muscular system to provide energy for the muscles to deliver "power to the pedals." So, consuming carbs the night before may not be delivered until the afternoon the next day. So again, to start with full tank, eat a carb rich meal (pastas, rice, breads, some cheese), along with a moderate amount of proteins (beef, chicken, fish), and plenty of fruits / vegetables.

Breakfast the morning before a long ride is also important. Again, think about keeping tanks full. You should have a "light" breakfast like a bagel, 1-2 pieces of toast, cereal, oatmeal, and fruit (not all together, but 1 or 2 servings of your favorite from this group). Drink water or fruit juice. Don't stop at Denny's on the way to the ride start and have a "Grand Slam." Avoid dairy products (eggs, milk, cheese, butter, etc.). OK have 1 or 2 small slices of bacon, but no more and no pancakes / waffles. These are harder to digest and will just stay in your stomach for most of the ride and may cause other stomach issues which don't help your riding or speed.

### **On the Bike Nutrition**

With a full tank of stored energy, you start out on the ride on Saturday morning. What next? **You need to eat more high energy food during the ride.** Foods higher with Sugar provide the quick energy boost to get you down the road for the next 15-20 miles. Easily digestible Carbs and Proteins help with the late stages of the ride. These sugars can come from fruits or refined sugar. Most rides provide cookies, and other "sweet" snacks. Pretzels are high in Sodium, a necessary electrolyte, especially when it's hot. By the way, if you compare the nutritional information of a powdered donut (or glazed), or a cookie to a "Power Bar" they are about the same. So it's not too important how you get the sugar, but it is important that you do eat some foods that give you an energy boost. Energy drinks (red bull, etc.) are NOT recommended as these are mostly caffeine and not sugar. These won't help on a long ride.

After about 3-4 hours of eating salty and sweet snacks, you're body is ready for some "real" food. A good recommendation is to stop for a light lunch during rides over 70 miles. Lunch can be a sandwich, pasta, fruit, cooked potatoes and other foods with carbs and proteins. Avoid Hamburgers, Sausage, Pizza, and other heavy meals if you're going to keep riding. These will not digest and pull blood from your muscles to your stomach leaving you feeling bad and tired.

### **Recovery Nutrition (after the ride)**

OK, you made it to the finish, now what to eat?

There is good evidence that for up to 1 hour immediately after finishing a workout, your body will be very efficient at converting carbohydrates to glycogen and build up your stores. So, you need to eat some carbohydrates and proteins shortly after finishing a ride. This can be another meal (dinner or late lunch). USA Cycling has published several articles on the benefits of Chocolate Milk for a recovery drink. Many Olympic athletes follow their workouts with Chocolate Milk.

### **Calories In and Calories Out**

Riding 70-100 miles burns about 2500-3500 Calories (out). Possibly more, depending on effort. This is typically the equivalent of a normal person's daily intake. So again the reason to eat during the ride is overcome this caloric loss (in). Riding once per week and maintaining a good nutritional balance during the ride won't lead to a lot of weight loss. Additional weekday workouts and a solid balanced diet are needed for a gradual weight loss.

Follow the above recommendations to **avoid a condition known as "Bonking."** This is one of the worst feelings. You're literally "out of gas." Pedaling becomes very hard and you will lose almost all speed and endurance. Again this can happen on rides over 50 miles, so remember....

Start with a full tank,

Eat during the ride,

Eat after the ride.

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